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Constrained to Deviate: John Wesley and the Evangelical Anglicans

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CONSTRAINED TO DEVIATE:
JOHN WESLEY AND THE EVANGELICAL ANGLICANS

By

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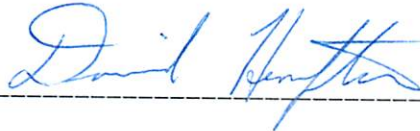
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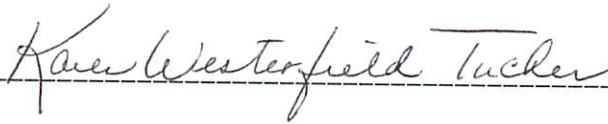
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ABSTRACT

Although the dominant theory in Evangelical and Methodist studies has been that John Wesley and the Evangelical Anglican clergy separated over theological issues related to Christian perfection and predestination, essentially outlined as an Arminian/Calvinist split, it is the argument of this work that the gradual split between these two “parties” was much more multifaceted. Looking at the broader political, social, and religious context in which the Evangelical Revival arose, the divide between Wesley and the Evangelicals can be seen as much as an outgrowth of ecclesiastical pressures caused by maverick use of church polity, political memory in the wake of the English Civil War and the Restoration, the creation of a distinctly “Methodist” ethos, and even the rise of High Church and Tory political power in the latter part of the eighteenth century in the face of outside challenges. These larger influences, together with personal issues among what amounts to a small group of men, created the impetus for a divide between these two parties. While theological issues remain essential to the overall picture, they are treated within larger historical contexts. Wesley’s divide from his closest Anglican associates remains a complex issue within the tumultuous early period of the Evangelical Revival.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

John Wesley's relationship with the Evangelical clergymen of the eighteenth-century Church of England is an historical topic that has been too little studied in its fuller context.¹ The standard line, if such a designation can be used, has been to claim that Wesley's Arminianism clashed with the dominant Calvinism of the Evangelicals of the early Revival period and caused an ultimate rift in the Evangelical Revival in England. Such an assertion assumes many things that this dissertation will attempt to debunk in an attempt to formulate a cogent description of the events and issues that led some of the Evangelical clergy to disassociate with Wesley and Wesleyan Methodism.²

The Evangelical Revival, and Methodism as a subset of that larger movement, was varied and should be understood in terms of broader movements or a conglomeration of movements

¹ There are various ways to use the term "Evangelical." Henry Rack argues for the use of the capitalized form to distinguish those "Evangelicals" within the Church of England from their dissenting colleagues in the larger Revival in his biography of John Wesley (*Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* [Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989], xvi). David Bebbington uses the capitalized form to designate "any aspect of the movement beginning in the 1730s" (*Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* [Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989], 1). D. Bruce Hindmarsh (*John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition: Between the Conversions of Wesley and Wilberforce* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001]) argues that the use of capitalization in order to differentiate churchman from dissenter encourages an all-too clean demarcation that was not so easily identifiable in the tumultuous milieu of this early period. I have chosen to follow Rack's usage as a means of providing clarity to a picture that is undoubtedly disheveled, yet still capable of cautious categorization. The use of the capitalized form to deny the common heritage of both ends of the evangelical spectrum is a historiographical tool that should be opposed as partisanship masked as history.

² The use of the term "Wesleyan Methodism" is meant to delineate that portion of the larger Revival specifically under the oversight of the Wesley brothers and especially John Wesley. This should be seen as a fluid designation. Readers with an understanding of British Methodist history are cautioned to avoid linking this group with the later Wesleyan Methodist denomination of the nineteenth century, although there are historical connections. My use of the term here is an attempt to classify one relational group within a larger and fluid Revival, not to designate a denomination.

together responding to larger societal realities.³ Given this larger context, any discussion of Methodism cannot assume that it was in these early days an organizational structure tightly knit to the wish and whim of John Wesley. Wesleyan Methodism was itself simply those clergy, lay preachers, and laity in association, or relationship with John Wesley, and thus in many ways lacked a formal structure. Despite the establishment of the Methodist Conference in 1744, Methodism would remain a fluid association so long as it was personally and relationally attached to Wesley.⁴

Henry Rack has described the Methodist movement in the eighteenth century as comprised of various revivals with many different wings, some under Wesley's direct influence and others not.⁵ This broad Revival included Arminians and Calvinists, Anglicans and Dissenters, enthusiasts and rationalists. At the same time, Methodism should not be seen, in these early days, apart from Wesley's influence or Wesley apart from Methodism and its various representatives. Thus, for instance, in regard to the current question, Wesley's relationship to various Evangelical clergy should not be seen apart from the work of these various wings and their varied controversies. The Methodist preacher in Lincolnshire, even if he is not in connection with Wesley, may, because of his evangelical preaching or his itinerating, leave an impression in the local parish that will affect the parish priest's impression of the broader movement. The term

³W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004), and David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁴For a fuller description of authority within early Wesleyan Methodism see Adrian Burdon, *Authority and Order: John Wesley and his Preachers* (Ashgate: Burlington, VT, 2005), especially the introduction.

⁵See Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast* (1989), 171-180, or Henry D. Rack, "Survival and Revival: John Bennet, Methodism, and the Old Dissent" in *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America c. 1750-c. 1950, Essays in Honour of W. R. Ward*, ed. Keith Robbins (New York: Basil and Blackwell, 1990), 2-3.

“Methodist” was often given to those with no association to the Wesley brothers, Whitefield, or any of the other leaders, but served as a designation of derision against what were seen as evangelical or irregular tendencies.⁶ The varied nature of the Methodist movement thus makes any attempt to describe a break between one varied movement with another difficult.⁷

In the middle part of the eighteenth century, the Evangelical Party was not yet formed, as was the case with most of the various groups that would become parties in the face of the Tractarian movement of the nineteenth century. The Evangelical clergy as a group were a small nascent conglomeration of friends and acquaintances, or even an Evangelical fraternity.⁸ Thus there was no official party line, as was also the case for early Wesleyan Methodism. None of the clergy, although there were some whose leadership should be noted, could serve to speak for the group. What distinguishes these Evangelicals from the majority of those within Wesleyan Methodism was their insistence to remain within the regular ministry of the Church of England. For this reason, polity and method will play a large role in the arguments that Wesley had with various Evangelical clergy, especially Samuel Walker and Thomas Adam, and to a certain extent

⁶ See for example, Edmund Gibson, *The Case of the Methodists Briefly Stated: More Particularly in the Point of Field-Preaching* (London: Printed for Edward Owen, 1744) and his *Observations Upon the Conduct and Behaviour of a Certain Sect, Usually Distinguished by the Name of Methodists* ([London: printed by Edward Owen, 1743 or 1744])

⁷ J. H. Overton, in his *Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century* ([London?: Longmans, 1900], 44), wrote that “Methodism and Evangelicalism were both parts of one great religious movement; and it is perhaps only by reading events of the eighteenth century in the light which the nineteenth throws upon them that the two can be separated by any very strong line of demarcation.” See pg. 44.

⁸ The evangelical clergy in the eighteenth-century were a small and embattled minority and should be seen as such. They were not the powerful lobby that they would become a century later. In regard to Wesley, this paper will assume that he became an evangelical by 1738 without placing too much emphasis on the Aldersgate experience of that year as a “conversion.” A list of Evangelical Anglican clergy serving during John Wesley’s lifetime is provided as an Appendix.

William Grimshaw, one of Wesley's most ardent Evangelical supporters. These issues alone, however, do not explain the gradual shift that took place as Methodism and Evangelical Anglicanism moved apart.

The reality of this varied historical picture forces the historian to look not only at broader cultural movements and issues, but to emphasize the importance of personal relationships. Group pronouncements do not suffice to describe a varied Methodism and a varied evangelicalism, and thus ideological arguments cannot be seen to trump political and social ones when discussing either group. The repercussion of Bishop Lavington's claims that Wesley was a cheap, beer guzzling seducer of bar maids cannot be overlooked when discussing Wesley's relationship with evangelical clergy in Cornwall. Likewise, the affects of ecclesiastical strictures on Evangelicals across the country beginning as early as the 1740s should not be ignored. The result of episcopal pressure on an Evangelical cleric's desire to be in relationship with irregular Methodism was swift and often unsympathetic.

As a result of movements in the 1760s to alter ecclesiastical admission standards at Oxford and Cambridge, the rise of conservative politics under an ascendant Toryism, and the reaction of the Establishment to those who continued to challenge Anglican hegemony, the relationship between Wesley and the Evangelicals becomes increasingly strained. By the end of the decade, it is hard to see either group working in tandem with the other.

The dissertation is divided into eight chapters which are arranged thematically. The issues that divided the Evangelicals and Wesley, taken together, paint a picture in which the division of the two is almost inevitable. Seen thematically, the reader is encouraged to move away from a

timeline that ends with the “Calvinist Controversies” of the 1770s. By the 1770s, the controversies over predestination in that period appear to be fought between opposing groups that had already taken divergent paths.⁹

The second chapter, *Early Evangelical Anglicanism Defined*, addresses the characteristics of early English Evangelicalism and its place in the larger Evangelical Revival. The chapter serves to define the parameters of the larger work, while highlighting the theology, social status, geography, and principal characters of the larger movement. The Evangelicals within the Church are designated as an “Evangelical fraternity” in an attempt to show the loose, but organic, connection that grew up among the Evangelical clergy as experience and oppression served to solidify group identity.

Chapter three examines John Wesley himself to show how he fit within the larger picture of English Evangelicalism during the period. One primary goal of the chapter is to outline the tension inherent in Wesley’s own evolving ecclesiological understanding as an Anglican and as an Evangelical. His conversion experience at Aldersgate where his heart was “strangely warmed” is placed within the larger international Revival, a sweeping movement that the Revival’s participants would never fully understand.

⁹ There is no doubt that the Calvinist Controversy was one of the great mud-slinging episodes of the Evangelical Revival. Rack notes that Wesley brought the Calvinist Augustus Toplady “to gibbering fury” at one point during a period in which intense personal abuse was common on both sides. See especially Rack’s treatment in *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 450-461. Essential primary sources include: the 1770 Minutes found in John Wesley, *The Methodist Societies, The Minutes of Conference*, Henry D. Rack, ed., Vol. 10 of the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011). John Fletcher’s *Checks on Antinomianism* (1770-1775), Richard Hill’s *Review* (1772), and Toplady’s *Historic Proof of the Calvinism of the Church of England* (1774).

The fourth chapter, *Propaganda and Power*, looks at public tracts, whether produced by the Wesley brothers or by their opponents, which were printed regularly during the early period of the Revival in England and served to form public impression of the broader evangelical movement. This propaganda served to complicate the relationship of John Wesley and the regular Evangelical clergy by placing greater public pressure on the Evangelicals as they struggled to remain within the structures of the Church as an already marginalized group.

The *Politics of Maverick Polity*, the fourth chapter, attempts to look at the political ramifications of Methodist irregularity in a post-Restoration era with a long historical memory. Methodism often raised suspicion of rebellion much akin to the Cromwellian revolution that overthrew Church and Crown in the previous century. Methodists were thought to be setting up “conventicles” throughout England that would undermine the regular clergy and perhaps the Crown. In regard to Methodist practice, and especially those promulgated by the Wesleyan Methodists such as the use of lay preachers and society and class meetings, the question is how these controversial practices affected the relationship between Wesley and his Evangelical colleagues.

Chapter six explores Evangelical Enclaves and Methodist incursions. Many of the complaints lodged against Wesley by the Evangelical clergy center on Wesley’s use of lay preachers and their work within parishes with an already established Evangelical Anglican presence. Anglican Evangelicals were an embattled minority group, and one with established regional centers or strongholds, and so the influx of Wesleyan Methodist lay preachers into these enclaves served to

place embattled minority against embattled minority, although with different stakes for each group.

In *The Eucharist and Methodist Ethos*, the continued suspicion of schism and the attempt on the part of many of Wesley's lay preachers to gain the right to administer the Eucharist collide. Many within the Evangelical "party" saw lay administration of the Eucharist as the end of their association with Methodism. William Grimshaw, Wesley's close associate and head of the Methodist work in the north of England, warned Wesley that any attempt on the part of lay preachers to administer the Sacraments would drive him from Methodism. Eucharistic practice, an issue that delves into theology as much as issues of church polity and authority, was seen by many to determine the true trajectory of Wesleyan Methodism's place in the Church. It also highlights Charles Wesley's High Churchmanship, a theme that runs through many of the chapters, but that is most obvious in chapters six and seven.¹⁰ Charles Wesley was instrumental in maintaining his brother's connections to the Evangelicals. Without Charles's incessant cry against schism, Wesley would have been left bereft of one of his most ardently conservative voices. Both Samuel Walker and John Fletcher, two leaders of the Evangelicals, corresponded with Charles in order to curtail what they saw as the excesses of John's maverick interpretation and use of Church polity. Charles is essential to understanding Wesley's relationship to the Evangelical clergy.

The Calvinist Controversies: A New Historiography attempts to create an entirely new

¹⁰ In order to provide clarity to the text, I have at times referred to Charles Wesley by his first name. Throughout the text, "Wesley" refers to John Wesley because he is the focus of the study. This is in no way meant to slight Charles Wesley, who, if he were the focus of the work, would be referred to more formally and customarily by his last name.

historiographical paradigm in which to place Wesley and the Evangelical clergy. Looking for the principles with which each defined their ministry, the chapter attempts to paint the picture of Wesley the Catholic, influenced by the Non-Jurors and the Caroline Divines, in stark difference to his Evangelical colleagues, who were mainly influenced by the revival of the “Old Divinity” of the Puritans and the English Reformers. This theological map provides a key to the theological debates that flared up between these groups throughout the Revival.

The ninth chapter, Political Convergences, Predestinarian Oxonians, Anglican Hegemony, and Irregular Casualties, describes the repercussions of changing political tides in the 1760s under George III and the influence of the changing political environment on evangelicalism. In 1768 six students were expelled from Oxford for “methodistical practices” as a part of a larger attempt on the part of many within the University to curtail the activities of evangelicals. Outside the University there was pressure to allow admission without subscription to the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles. The reaction in the University was a call for stricter adherence in the face of these challenges. Evangelicals became targets within this larger scheme and soon found themselves further marginalized.

As a group that already had difficulty gaining ordination and livings, the expulsions from Oxford denied Evangelicals access, as a group, to one of the two universities in England and thus in a certain sense to the prospects of ordination. If the movement intended to work within the regular systems of the Church of England, the Evangelicals were faced with the repercussions of close association with Methodism in stark terms. These expulsions can be seen as a watershed

moment in Methodist/Evangelical relations, and as a prime example or source of Methodist/Evangelical tensions.

Finally, in *Constrained to Deviate*, Wesley's last efforts at union with the Evangelicals are discussed. In the 1760s Wesley attempted for the last time to form an Evangelical union based on shared theological principles including justification by faith and holiness of heart and life. His efforts met with little success and seem to have been the last attempt on his part to create a lasting link with his Evangelical colleagues. This concluding section will not only describe these attempts on Wesley's part, but also identify the reasons why such an attempt had little or no chance of bearing fruit given the overall trajectory outlined in the preceding chapters. By 1770 there is a discernible, although amiable, divide between the two groups that will remain throughout the rest of Wesley's lifetime.

The reader will note that the beginning of each chapter begins with a collect from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.¹¹ These collects have been chosen to highlight the common prayers that were used by all the participants described in these pages, and to highlight aspects of the chapter using the participants' common liturgical context. Read from the perspective of the various participants, however, these prayers take on entirely different meanings. To the staunch defender of the Establishment, the Evangelical working on the margins of the Church, or the Revivalist

¹¹ It should be noted that the title of the Book of Common Prayer, like the Bible, is not italicized. This usage has become normative and can be seen in such scholarly works as *The Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer: A Worldwide Survey*, eds. Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) among others.

proclaiming his message at all cost, these commonly-read collects were used for very different purposes.

CHAPTER TWO

EARLY EVANGELICAL ANGLICANISM DEFINED: IDENTITY AND CHALLENGE IN THE MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

O Lord, we beseech thee to keep thy Church and household continually in thy true religion; that they who do lean only upon the hope of thy heavenly grace, may evermore be defended by thy mighty power, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

In August of 1749 a conference of evangelical leaders met in Bristol, that hotbed of both Anglican and dissenting evangelicalism, to discuss the possibility of uniting their evangelistic efforts.¹² The attendees, known by their practices as “irregular,” were all members of the Church of England, including clergymen John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and the enigmatic Welsh lay revivalist Howell Harris. While the goal of uniting the various efforts of these men remained elusive, the conference provided ample opportunity to air the dirty laundry of personal and ecclesiastical jealousies circulating among the leaders of the Evangelical Revival. Among the many complaints aimed at John Wesley, who was the target of most of the criticism during the conference, Whitefield’s most pointed charge was that Wesley was “monopolising the name of Methodist to himself only.” His complaint may seem a trivial argument over nomenclature, yet what it provided is a glimpse into the ambiguous and volatile nature of early Methodism in the

¹² John Wesley, *Journals and Diaries III (1743-1754)*, ed. W Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, Vol 20 of the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976 -), 295, fn. 10. See also, S T Kimbrough, Jr. and Kenneth G. C. Newport, *The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A.*, (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2007), 2:579, where Charles wrote: “Our conference this week with Mr Whitefield and Mr Harris came to nought; I think through their flying off.”

earliest period of the evangelical movement in England.¹³

Although the term “Methodist” is now thought by the sheer force of Wesley’s organizational abilities to be synonymous with Wesleyanism itself, at the beginning of the Evangelical Revival in England it was an elusive term.¹⁴ The title was often used as a derogatory term to slander anyone who espoused aspects of an evangelical theology or who participated in “methodistical” activities such as field preaching or attendance at evangelical society meetings.¹⁵ Thus the designation “Methodist” was regularly applied not only to the followers of John and Charles Wesley or George Whitefield, but also to evangelicals both Arminian or Reformed, regular or irregular, Anglican or dissenting. It was “methodistical” behavior, for instance, that was the

¹³ See L. E. Elliott-Binns, *The Early Evangelicals: A Religious and Social Study* (London: Lutterworth, 1953), especially 446-449 where Elliott-Binns describes the efforts of Evangelicals post-1789 to separate themselves more firmly from the title “Methodist.” George Whitefield had for a long time been, perhaps, the most widely known “Methodist” in Britain. Whitefield was, it could be argued, more aware of the power of that term than even Wesley. See especially George Whitefield, *An answer to the first and second part of an anonymous pamphlet, entitled, Observations upon the conduct and behaviour of a certain sect usually distinguished by the name of Methodists. In two letters to the Right Reverend the Bishop of London, and the other the Right Reverend the bishops concern’d in the publication thereof* (London: 1744). Whitefield (p. 6) saw very plainly the political ramifications of the pamphlet and insinuated that *Observations* was written to push the Methodists out of the Church into dissent, thus relegating its potential to cause civil and political uprising. For a contemporary example of the term used against all of those involved in the Revival, see as an example Philadelphus, *Remarks on a Pamphlet, Intituled, A Dialogue Between a True Methodist and an Erroneous Methodist* (London: 1751). Arguing for a broader understanding of the theological diversity of early Methodism, Joanna Cruickshank in *Pain, Passion, and Faith: Revisiting the Place of Charles Wesley in Early Methodism* ([Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009], esp. 169-170), provides further analysis of the theological diversity of early Methodism through Charles Wesley’s emphasis on suffering. Cruickshank argues that Charles Wesley should be seen as a theologian in his own right within a theologically diverse movement.

¹⁴ For this very reason, David Hempton refers to “Methodisms” in his book *Methodism and Politics in British Society 1750-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), 11.

¹⁵ For a discussion of the term “Methodist” as applied to Oxford Methodism, see Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 45-46. In his *Force of Truth: An Authentic Narrative* (1778), Thomas Scott wrote that, “Methodist, as a stigma of reproach, was first applied to Mr. Wesley, Mr. Whitefield, and their followers; and to those who, professing an attachment to our Established Church, and disclaiming the name of Dissenters, were not conformists in point of parochial order, but had separate seasons, places, and assemblies of worship” (Part I, *sub finem*).

impetus behind the expulsion of six evangelical students at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford in 1768. However, not one of them had connections to the Wesley brothers.¹⁶ That the term Methodist ultimately identified those under the conference structures of John Wesley's connectional system—an idea anathema to Whitefield—was not a foregone conclusion for most of the eighteenth century, and the term would retain its elusive character in various quarters until the actual establishment of Methodist ecclesiastical structures beginning in the 1780s.

The elastic nature of the term “Methodist,” as a blanket term for those involved in England's evangelical uprising, is fitting to describe a movement whose parameters are often muddled, and whose adherents included not only a smattering of classes, professions, and religious backgrounds, but whose leaders spanned a spectrum ranging from the mentally unstable enthusiast to the dignified members of the aristocratic parlor.¹⁷ The Evangelical Revival in Britain included leaders as divergent as the stridently establishmentarian Thomas Adam and the self-made prophet Thomas Maxwell. It included recognizable figures such as the Wesleys and Whitefield, but also the

¹⁶For primary sources offering the perspective of both sides of the St. Edmund Hall expulsions see William Browne, *A Vindication of the Proceedings Against the Six Members of E— Hall, Oxford by a Gentleman of the University* (London: Printed for M. Hingeston in the strand near Temple-Bar, S. Bladon in Pater Noster-Row and sold by D. Prince at Oxford, 1768). Also, Sir Richard Hill, *Pietas Oxoniensis: or, A Full and Impartial Account of the Expulsion of Six Students from St. Edmund Hall, Oxford; With a Dedication to the Right Honourable the Earl of Litchfield, Chancellor of that University by a master of arts of the University of Oxford* (London: Printed for G. Keith, J. Millan, E. and C. Dilly, M. Folingsby, Mr. Mills [in] Bath, Mr. Eddowes at Shrewsbury, Mr. Collins at Salisbury, Mr. Fletcher at Oxford, and Mr. Merrill at Cambridge, 1768). For a modern, although brief, account see, L. S. Sutherland and L. G. Mitchell, eds., *History of the University of Oxford: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

¹⁷ William Cowper, for example, a well-known hymn writer connected with John Newton was known to have mental health issues. Lady Selina Huntingdon and Lord Dartmouth were the best-known aristocrats engaged in the work of the Revival.

little known but influential headmaster of the Truro Grammar School, George Conon.¹⁸ In many ways in this early period, to say “Methodist” was to say “evangelical.” Ecclesiastical nomenclature, later etched in stone, was as elusive as the “showers of grace” that seemed to follow these evangelists.

While acknowledging the varied circumstances of the participants in the larger Revival, this chapter will attempt to highlight one arm of the movement, the Evangelical Anglican clergy within the Church of England, while well aware of the historiographical difficulty of accurately categorizing persons and movements in this period.¹⁹ Peter Nockles has written that in the eighteenth-century Church, “neat categorizations and labels ought to be curbed, if not avoided.”²⁰ While embracing Nockles’s interpretive lens, it must be admitted that there were distinctions in the eighteenth-century Church between those evangelical leaders who were ordained and those who were not, between those who worked within the parish structures of the Church, the “regular” clergy, and those who chose to work via “irregular” means. A “regular” could become “irregular” or *vis versa*. He could dabble in a mixture of the regular and irregular methods, but the

¹⁸ See G. C. B. Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals 1735-60: A Study of Walker of Truro and Others* (London: SPCK, 1951), for an overview of Conon’s influence, especially related to his influence upon Samuel Walker, the later leader of the Cornish revival within the Church of England.

¹⁹ The international, pan-denominational, and yet oddly unified nature of the Revival is seen in contemporary works such as the anonymous *The Christian History, Containing Accounts of the Revival and Propagation of Religion in Great-Britain & America. For the Year 1743* (Boston: 1744-45). This work not only describes trans-Atlantic events, but uses key evangelical nomenclature to such as “awakened” to describe the New Birth. The work contains sections entitled, “Concerning those who have been awaken’d and appear now to be converted in a silent unobserved Manner” (pp. 94-95), and “Concerning them who cried out when they were awakened, or made Application to me from Time to Time, under their spiritual Distress; but were not under any bodily Affections” (pp. 98-103).

²⁰ Peter Nockles, “Church Parties in Pre-Tractarian Church of England, 1750-1833: The ‘Orthodox’ – Some Problems of Definition and Identity,” in *The Church of England, c. 1689-c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 334.

distinction between an ordained priest in the Established Church and an ordained minister of one of the dissenting bodies is easily identifiable. Likewise, the distinction between a lay member of the Established Church and a lay member of one of the dissenting bodies is also identifiable. Given the elastic nature of the revival, categorizations should only be placed upon the historical narrative with the full acknowledgment that the boundaries between any identifiable group do not provide stark lines of demarcation, but simply provide an interpretive lens through which the reader may gain a deeper understanding of an historical picture that at times seems to baffle attempts at clarification.

Within the context of the revivalist fever of this early period, ecclesiastical and thus political, and perhaps economic, attachments should not be overlooked. The experience of evangelical conversion, and later descriptions of those experiences, may have provided a common experiential framework or language in which to unite the various arms of the Revival in the eighteenth century, both within and outside of the Established Church. But this common language did not overcome, or supplant, issues of polity and politics entrenched in England's ecclesiastical soil after centuries of ecclesiastical and political dispute. The English Civil War of the previous century had not been forgotten. In the eighteenth century, these memories of the war were intertwined with the ecclesiastical and political issues that had been part and parcel of English life since the Reformation period.²¹ As the practices and teachings of the Evangelicals

²¹ The preface of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer makes explicit reference to the "late unhappy confusions" and connects the Interregnum's disruption of English ecclesiastical and political life to the need for liturgical uniformity with the restoration of the monarchy. For contemporary sources that connect the English Civil War and the need for religious and political moderation, see Bruno Ryves, *Mercurius Rusticus: Or, the Country's Complaint of the Barbarous Outrages Begun in the Year 1642, by the Sectaries of this Late Flourishing Kingdom, Fifth Edition*

gained popular notice in the 1730s, many saw the movement as another form of the same religious enthusiasm that threw the nation into disarray under the banner of Puritanism.²²

The majority of the eighteenth century in England is rightly seen as a period of relative ecclesiastical and political passivity, and yet the energy spent to squelch forms of religious fever or “enthusiasm” should not be overlooked as some sort of negation or *laissez-faire* attitude toward governance. The English approach to governance in the eighteenth century, both in terms of the Church and the State, was just as intentional as in any other modern period. That the eighteenth century has been judged for many years in light of nineteenth-century expectations, and is now by means of revisionist historians coming to be understood in its own terms, should always be kept in mind.²³ The negative assumptions of the later Low Church Evangelicals and their High Church Tractarian adversaries in the nineteenth century, who, in spite of their mutual disdain for one another held similar views of the eighteenth-century Church, should be seen as the polemic that it is.²⁴

(London: 1732). Originally printed in 1685 (the fifth edition appeared in 1732), Ryves' piece includes a description of the Parliamentarians as “Schismatics” and the war as “unnatural.” As an example of an explicitly religious connection see, J. H. and A. B., *Gratitude to God the Surest Defence Against Future Dangers. A Sermon Preached to a Selected Audience, on Thursday October 9, 1746. Being the Day Appointed for a General Thanksgiving for Our Happy Deliverance from the Miseries of the Late Unnatural Rebellion* (London: 1746).

²² See J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology, and Politics During the Ancien Regime* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²³ See William Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832: Unity and Accord* (New York: Routledge, 2001), especially his chapter, “Historians and the Eighteenth-Century Church,” where Gibson describes historiographical approaches of the period and efforts to rescue it from negative Victorian assessments (pgs. 4-27).

²⁴ See not only Gordon Rupp's *Religion in England, 1688-1791* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), but also Robert G. Ingram's *Religion, Reform and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century: Thomas Secker and the Church of England: Studies in Modern British Religious History*; v. 17 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007) on renewal in the

Even if the eighteenth-century Church of England is regarded as passive, it should never be thought a church in ruin or decrepit. Jeremy Black notes that “there is copious evidence both of massive observance of the formal requirements of the churches and of widespread piety.”²⁵ Echoing Black, Nigel Yates claims that religion in England, and its Established Church, was much healthier than has been previously acknowledged.²⁶ The Church of England in the eighteenth century was a church that understood, as much of Europe after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 did, the repercussions of theologically-inspired warfare. The caution that such knowledge engendered has been misinterpreted by many as weakness. Revolutionary sentiments on the Continent and the phantom of Oliver Cromwell with the image of a beheaded Charles I, represented lasting images of zealotry which were ever-present in the imagination of English Churchmen in the period.

The English Civil War had as much or more to do with power struggles between King and Parliament as it did between Laudian and Reformed “parties” within the Church, but on-the-ground the nuances of history are often overlooked. The complexities of the Civil War period was replaced by a common fear of any real or supposed challenge to the *Pax Anglia* enjoyed by a Latitudinarian Church and a Whig government. Alan Harding wrote that although the Church of England was the “victor” of seventeenth-century struggles, it came away from that victory with

eighteenth-century Church as examples of this new perspective.

²⁵ Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain, 1688-1783*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 136.

²⁶See Nigel Yates, *Eighteenth-Century Britain: Religion and Politics 1714-1815* (New York: Longman, 2008), esp. p. 4, for a discussion of religion in England as positive in the eighteenth century.

definite scars.²⁷ Within this context, and seen by the Established Church, the uprising now known as the Evangelical Revival was anything but a welcome addition to the ecclesiastical climate of eighteenth-century England. That Evangelicals remained within a Church that in so many ways thought them malevolent and fanatical is a story worth telling all on its own.²⁸

Defining “Evangelicalism”

Defining evangelicalism and Evangelicalism within the Church of England in this early period is no easy task. W. R. Ward has written that “Evangelicals, in the Anglo-Saxon sense of the word, seem generally to have found it easier to recognise each other than others have found it to categorize them.”²⁹ Partisanship, both Methodist and Anglican, has attempted neatly to write the story of this early period to emphasize their own later party’s essential role in the rise of this popular movement.³⁰ However, even those living in this early period were labeled or claimed titles

²⁷ Alan Harding, *The Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion: A Sect in Action in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6.

²⁸ The standard work on English evangelicalism remains G. R. Balleine’s, *A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England* (London: Longman’s Green, & Co., 1909). Recent works include: David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), and Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England, 1734-1984* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988). Works that include England but cover a broader geographic spectrum include Mark Noll’s, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys*, *History of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004).

²⁹ W. R. Ward, *Early Evangelicalism: A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6.

³⁰ Later evangelical identity in the nineteenth century will be fused upon the battlefield, first with the High Church Party and subsequently against the Higher Critics or Liberal Protestants of the later part of the century. This ecclesiastical battlefield will not only create identifiable parties within the Church, as shown in the work of Norman Sykes, but will also change the very nature of evangelicalism. For example, Methodism will, under Jabez Bunting and other post-Wesley leaders of the newly-formed church, relegate John and Charles Wesley’s sacramental and liturgical theological emphases in the face of what they saw as High Church extremism or abuse of these more catholic elements

that deviate from the story of a later desire for clean lines. John Fletcher, for instance, was both an Anglican and a Methodist; so were John and Charles Wesley, William Grimshaw, George Whitefield, and Lady Huntingdon. All of the early Evangelicals were called “Methodist” or “methodistical” by their opponents. Some claimed the title for themselves.³¹ Often, anyone promoting the need for conversion or the New Birth was written off as an enthusiast.³² Lady Huntingdon had a connexion of Methodists, so did Wesley and Whitefield. Samuel Walker allowed small group meetings in his parish as did Fletcher, Newton, and Berridge. And yet we also see that Wesley had difficulty, and ultimately failed, in his attempts finally to relinquish Methodist societies under his control within the Evangelical parishes administered by Stillingfleet and Venn.³³ These men were all a part of a larger movement, and their common allegiance to

of the Christian tradition. In so doing, not only will Methodism define itself apart from the High Church’s sacramental and liturgical revival, but will actually alter the Wesley brothers’ vision of Methodism itself. The early Methodist clamoring for the sacrament, an essential element of the early Wesleyan understanding of the process of sanctification, will subside with the passing cadence of the Corpus Christi procession of the Tractarians and find an alternative outlet amongst the rambunctious cacophony of the revival meeting. See, for example Mats Selen, *The Oxford Movement and Wesleyan Methodism in England 1833–1882. A study in religious conflict*, Bibliotheca Historico-Ecclesiastica Lundensis, 30. (Sweden: Lund University Press, 1992).

³¹See Fletcher’s letter to Charles Wesley, Tuesday, 26 December 1758 in Peter Forsaith, ed., *Unexamined Labours: Letters of the Revd John Fletcher to leaders in the Evangelical Revival* (London: Epworth, 2008), 56-57.

³² Dewey Wallace describes the rise of anti-enthusiasm campaigns beginning in the 1650s. He specifically mentions Henry More’s *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus: Or, a Discourse of the Nature, Causes, Kinds, and Cure of Enthusiasme* (1662) as “an early anatomy of enthusiasm.” More wrote in the 1650s and for political reasons left the Puritans out of his equations. What he did describe as enthusiasm would define the term for decades. His definition included “dabblers in alchemy and magic,” and those overwhelmed by delusions and mental disorders. His examples included a nobleman who thought he was made of glass and a woman who thought she was a cat and pounced on mice. Wallace notes that More helped set the stage for an anti-enthusiasm campaign. See Dewey A. Wallace, *Shapers of English Calvinism 1660-1714: Variety, Persistence, and Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 39.

³³Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (London: Epworth Press, 1970), 185-186. The issue came to a head at the conference of 1761, and a compromise was agreed upon in the case of Venn’s parish. Venn had an amicable relationship with the Wesleys, but those under Wesley’s care were afraid of losing contact with Wesley if

justification by faith and the New Birth served to solidify them within a milieu that found their ideas troubling if not outright dangerous.³⁴

The recognition of the elusive nature of early evangelicalism is a necessary first step to define the earliest period of the movement. Additionally, in order to begin to understand evangelicalism, and more specifically the first forms of modern evangelicalism that arrived in England in the 1730s, attachment to the primacy of theological systems must be tempered by the inclusion of practical considerations including: church polity, liturgical practice, and an emphasis on the need for the experiential. Peter Forsaith goes so far as to claim that “‘Evangelical’ at this time referred to being evangelistic rather than to doctrinal position.”³⁵ While pointing to one of the defining characteristics of evangelical practice, the “being evangelistic” must also be understood as the outgrowth of a theological viewpoint calling for such drastic behavior.

David Bebbington’s four-fold definition of modern evangelicalism is the most useful place to begin to define the evangelical movement of this period. Bebbington’s definition has become the standard defining principle of current evangelical scholarship. His definition is the standard used for the inclusion of persons in the *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, and is also used by

their society was under the control of Venn. Such concerns show the relational nature of early evangelicalism in Britain.

³⁴ See for example George Swathe, *Enthusiasm No Novelty, or, The Spirit of the Methodists in the Year 1641 and 1642* (London: Printed for T. Cooper, 1739), which explicitly compared Methodism to the Parliamentary forces of the seventeenth century; and Joseph Trapp, *The True Spirit of the Methodists, and Their Allies (Whether Other Enthusiasts, Papists, Deists, Quakers, or Atheists) Fully Laid Open* (London: Printed for Lawton Gilliver, and sold by T. Cooper, 1740).

³⁵Forsaith, *Unexamined Labours*, 24, footnote 71.

David Hempton and Mark Noll, among other leading scholars of the field.³⁶ Bebbington summarizes his “four qualities” of evangelical religion which include: “*conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross,” claiming that “together they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism.”³⁷ Bebbington’s categories provide a generally elastic description of evangelicalism broadly conceived from 1730 up to the present. Their elasticity rightly matches the elasticity of the movement they attempt to define.

These four qualities are evident in the theology and practice of evangelicals in the earliest period. Of the four, however, conversionism reigns supreme. Thomas Adam, one of the early Evangelical Anglicans whose penchant for writing more than made up for his lackluster pulpit performance, highlighted this evangelical trait in his 1767 *Practical Lectures on the Church-Catechism*. Adam questions “whether religion, according to the plain meaning of the Bible, is not *Conversion?* and whether any kind of religion, which leaves him just where it found him, without working any change of his tempers, and affections, can be pleasing to God, or a ground of his present and future happiness.”³⁸ This conversion-dominated theology, or “practical divinity” in the language of

³⁶For example, David Hempton and Myrtle Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society 1740-1890* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 14; and Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 16.

³⁷Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 2-3.

³⁸Thomas Adam, *Practical Lectures on the Church-Catechism*. By Thomas Adam. The fifth edition. To Which is Now Added, An Exercise, by Way of Question and Answer, Preparatory to Confirmation. London, 1767. Eighteenth Century

the Wesleyan arm of the movement, runs throughout Adam's *Lectures*, a work which was widely praised and widely used by the Evangelicals.³⁹ Using distinctly Evangelical language known to emphasize the experiential nature of the Christian faith, Adam claimed that, "The end of all divine knowledge is practice and self-application."⁴⁰ It was this experience which was the "touchstone of the heart" or the foundation upon which the converted soul could rest. The doctrine of assurance was not simply a matter of concern for Wesleyans and Moravians arguing over the merits or demerits of Quietism.⁴¹ In this heart-felt experience the Spirit of God would "do its work in us" and in this experience "we must work with it."⁴²

The call to conversion was at the heart of what it meant to be an evangelical. Adam said it distinctly when he wrote, "The one thing necessary is conversion; I mean, as begun, and carried on, by the holy spirit."⁴³ Wesley's now famous dictum that he had nothing to do but save souls summarized the watchword and song of these men. Although Bebbington's four-fold definition appears at first glance to be a quadrilateral of equal sides, it was this experience of the New Birth, or conversion, that more than anything defined the outlook of these early evangelists. This one

Collections Online. Gale Group, vi. See also 64.

³⁹ Adam's *Practical Lectures* was widely sold. The copy now held at Lambeth Palace includes Archbishop Secker's personal bookplate, indicating that the work was in the Archbishop's personal library.

⁴⁰ Adam, *Practical Lectures*, 8.

⁴¹See John Wesley, *Journals and Diaries II (1738-1743)*, eds. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, Vol. 19 in the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 152-162, for Wesley's view of the "Stillness Controversy" that ultimately split the Wesleyan Methodists and the English Moravians.

⁴²Adam, *Practical Lectures*, 8.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 10.

“side” of the quadrilateral outweighed the rest and was the cornerstone, rather than an equal partner with the others.⁴⁴

Perhaps because of its centrality to their message, many Evangelicals believed it necessary to proclaim boldly this conversion, even bluntly. In a letter between the Evangelical clergy John Newton and Henry Foster, Newton describes a scene in William Grimshaw’s Haworth church that, perhaps unique in its bluntness, is characteristic of their passionate desire to convert England. Newton described an occasion where “Whitefield began in his suave and conciliatory way” with kind words to the congregation, which ignited Grimshaw who “sprung to his feet at once in the reading-desk and cried, ‘For God’s sake do not speak so. I pray you do not flatter them. The greater part of them are going to Hell with their eyes open.’”⁴⁵

John Walsh describes the Evangelicals as “remarkably unorganized, sprinkled thinly and haphazardly across the parochial map of Anglicanism.”⁴⁶ Bebbington described them as “few and scattered.”⁴⁷ These clergymen formed a desultory crew. They did not form a party, as they would later in the next century. Parties were anathema in this period of English history, and were viewed

⁴⁴ This emphasis on conversion can be seen throughout the primary sources including: George Whitefield, *The Almost Christian: A Sermon Preached to a Numerous Audience in England* (London: 1739); Martin Madan, *Justification by Works: and Not by Faith Only, Stated, Explained, and Reconciled with Justification by Faith, Without Works. Being the Substance of a Sermon on James ii.24. Preached at St. Vedast’s Church, Foster-Lane, February 8, 1761* (London: 1761); and in John Wesley’s sermons including: “Salvation by Faith;” “Awake, Though That Sleepest;” “Justification by Faith;” and “The Marks of the New Birth,” among others. See John Wesley, *Sermons I* (1-33), ed. Albert C. Outler, Vol. 1 of the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980).

⁴⁵Balleine, *A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England*, 68.

⁴⁶J. D. Walsh, “The Anglican Evangelicals in the Eighteenth Century” in *Aspects de L’Anglicanisme. Travaux du Centre D’Etudes Supérieures Spécialisé D’Histoire des Religions de Stausbourg* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974), 90.

⁴⁷Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 31.

as divisive and unpatriotic. Nockles, in agreement with Gerald Parson and Paul Avis, did not deny the existence of church parties in “the pre-Tractarian Church of England,” but argued that they “formed part of a broadly based theological consensus which the Tractarians destroyed, and which according to Avis ‘may be likened to a series of mutually overlapping circles.’”⁴⁸ The Evangelical “circle” overlapped with various forms of dissent, specifically Presbyterianism and Wesleyan Methodism.⁴⁹ The Evangelical circle, however, is unique, as the Evangelicals of this period of the Revival are best understood in relational terms, even as a fraternity.

Even understood as a fraternity, the Evangelicals were not connected like Wesley’s “sons in the gospel,” but rather through an interlocking series of friendships forged in the shared experience of opposition to the conversionist message that drove them and united them in their efforts to find like-minded colleagues. G. C. B. Davies notes that, “An interesting feature of the Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century is the fact that so many of these ‘enlightened’ clergy and laity in all parts of the country were acquainted with each other.”⁵⁰ Beginning in the 1750s in the Evangelical strongholds of Cornwall and Yorkshire, and later in various parts of the country, the Evangelicals formed clerical associations.⁵¹ Samuel Walker, perpetual curate in Truro and

⁴⁸Nockles, “Church Parties in Pre-Tractarian Church of England,” 336.

⁴⁹ This overlap with dissent is noteworthy in that many Evangelicals, according to Overton, were more comfortable relating to avowed dissenters than they were with the ecclesiologically-elusive Wesleyan Methodists. Taking Evangelical discomfort into consideration, Overton wrote that the Evangelicals “foresaw the inevitable break which must occur at Wesley’s death, if not before, between Methodists and the Church of England, and they strongly objected to being thought to be in any way mixed up with a movement which was leading to a separation which they would sincerely deplore,” (*Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century*, 51).

⁵⁰Davies, 167.

⁵¹ For studies particularly devoted to early Evangelicalism in Cornwall and Yorkshire, see Davies’s work (fn.

unofficial leader of the Cornish Evangelicals, formed such a society in or near 1750. Kenneth Hylson-Smith calls Walker the “prime mover” of this particular society whose purpose was “to increase the efficiency and usefulness of each of the members within their own parishes as a consequence of the mutual exchange of ideas and opinions.”⁵² Hylson-Smith sees this clerical society as yet another means by which Walker, a staunch churchman and friendly critic of Wesleyan irregularity, attempted to work within the parochial structures of the Established Church as an Evangelical; clerical societies had been common within Anglicanism well before this time.⁵³

Walker was not the only Evangelical clergyman who set up an early society for the benefit of evangelical fellowship. John Fletcher created a similar group in the industrial stronghold of Shropshire in the Spring of 1765. He described the group to Charles Wesley in a letter shortly after their first meeting. The group of six Evangelical Churchmen included: Edward Davies of Bengeworth; a “Mr Baily of Pashur,” who is thought to be Thomas Beale of Pershore; Edward Stillingfleet of West Bromwich; John Riland, who although connected with Huddersfield at this time had family connections near Shropshire; Thomas Biddulph then of Worcester; and William Talbot, Vicar of Kineton, Warwickshire. Two of the members were absent for the first meeting “one on business and another with a bad leg.” They agreed to meet together four times a year.⁵⁴

18) and John Walsh, “The Yorkshire Evangelicals in the Eighteenth Century: With Special Reference to Methodism,” Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge, 1956).

⁵²Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England, 1734-1984*, 23-24.

⁵³ Ibid.

Similarly, Newton's Olney parish became a center of evangelical activity both Established and dissenting: Newton attracted both local Evangelicals in an association much like Fletcher's and Evangelicals from throughout England who would make a sort of pilgrimage to the Olney rectory. Hindmarsh notes that within six months of Newton's arrival as curate in Olney in 1764, Newton started a monthly meeting of six or seven Evangelical clergy in "the adjoining counties."⁵⁵ This meeting soon included evangelicals of various denominations, an innovative move among the early Evangelical Anglicans, yet not out of character with Newton's local ecumenism. Even into the nineteenth century, Newton's society remained a regular and important clerical meeting.⁵⁶

The formation of clerical societies in a formal sense and the letters between the Evangelical clergymen on a more personal level, show a sincere filial bond. They also help map out the varied connections amongst the 150 or so clergy in the Church of England during the life of John Wesley who were identifiably Evangelical.⁵⁷ Charles Wesley's letters to John Fletcher of Madeley, although perhaps more intimate than most, provide a window into this social network of evangelical camaraderie. Charles and Fletcher maintained a close friendship throughout most of the Revival.

⁵⁴Forsaith, *Unexampled Labours*, 210, letter to Charles Wesley, 28 April 1765. See also Fletcher's letter to George Whitefield dated 28 May 1768 where Fletcher mentions "our meeting of the clergy in Birmingham." Whether or not this is the same group described to Charles Wesley is not clear.

⁵⁵ Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, 207-11.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, footnote 113.

⁵⁷There are various estimates given for the number of Evangelical Anglican clergy in this period. Frank Baker identified 112 Evangelical Anglicans during Wesley's lifetime see *John Wesley and the Church of England* (London: Epworth, 1970). My own estimate, working principally from the *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography (DEB)*, is that the number of Evangelical clergy during the life of Wesley is closer to 150. John Walsh argues that by the end of the century there were between 300-500 Evangelicals. See Walsh's "The Anglican Evangelicals in the Eighteenth Century," 102.

Forsaith writes that, in terms of Fletcher's relationship with the Wesley brothers that, "If John Wesley was a father in God, Charles was a brother in Christ."⁵⁸ This close bond would only wane with Charles's later inattention to it. As pivotal as both men were to the Wesleyan arm of the Revival, their letters to one another describe an Evangelical network that far outnumbered those Evangelicals present at Wesley's conferences.⁵⁹ Although lengthy, a quotation from a letter of Fletcher to Charles Wesley in the summer of 1761 describes not only the interaction common among these randomly-placed clergymen and their supporters, but also the ecclesiastical battle lines common among them. Every person mentioned is either an Evangelical clergyman or a member of an aristocratic family friendly to their cause. Fletcher writes:

Last [S]unday I made a visit to Mr. Stillingfleet[,] Lord Dartmouth's Chaplain and minister of Bromwich, I offered him my pulpit as if to a Deputy who also preaches Christ with daring. He is on close terms with Mr. Downing and resembles him by his gentleness and his modesty: He is so afraid of acting the part of a Methodist although he preaches their doctrines that I doubt if he will accept my offer. He took me to dine at Lord D[artmouth]'s who was that day with Milady [Lady Huntingdon] at his country seat, if I converse often with him he would soon render me a churchman in all respects: What a difference between Mr. Berridge and him! He read me the details of Mr. Walker his close friend: What a loss for the little flock of Christ!⁶⁰

This one quotation, which is not uncommon in Fletcher's and Charles Wesley's correspondence,

⁵⁸Forsaith, *Unexampled Labours*, 27. See Appendix.

⁵⁹See John Bennet's *Copy of the Minutes of the Conferences of 1744, 1745, 1747, and 1748; with Wesley's Copy of those of 1746*, Publication of the Wesley Historical Society, no. 1. (London: Wesley Historical Society, 1896-1904) for notes on the earliest conferences. Also, *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, from the first, held in London, by the late Rev John Wesley, A.M., in the year 1744* (London: John Mason at the Wesleyan Conference Office, 1862-1864). Wesley's Journal, especially when describing the earliest conferences, is short on detail. Ward notes that it was later Methodist ecclesiology that put emphasis on the importance of the earliest conferences. See, for instance, *Works*, 20:34 for Wesley's journal account of the 1744 conference.

⁶⁰Forsaith, *Unexampled Labours*, 135. As noted in the text, a cadre of Evangelical clergy can be found throughout Charles' and Fletcher's letters. For further examples where Evangelical connections are mentioned see Fletcher's letters to Charles on 1 Mar. and 6 May 1760.

names four Evangelicals and the two leading evangelical aristocrats around whom a coterie of Evangelicals often gathered. The Evangelicals mentioned were from the Midlands, Essex, Yorkshire, and Cornwall, nearly representing the four corners of England. The letter also mentions the argument over irregularity that would become one of the principal causes of friction and separation. The conservatives Walker and Stillingfleet and the maverick Berridge were on opposing sides of this debate.

What is striking about this fraternity of Evangelical clergy in this early period is not necessarily the fact that they formed a social network based upon shared emphases, but that they formed a company that was, like the Wesleyans themselves, a fraternity on the fringe of the English Establishment. These men were not dissenters, yet neither were they at the centers of traditional Anglican life. They may have drawn large crowds of curious spectators from time to time, even collecting wayward parishioners on Sunday mornings, but they did not inhabit the steepled Established parishes, nor reside in the places of power. Yorkshire and Cornwall, as already noted, served as their initial strongholds, and neither could be further from the power structures of London and Oxbridge. The Evangelicals retained an ebbing presence among the academics of Oxford and Cambridge, but were nearly absent from London throughout most of this period. With one tenth of the nation's population, London served not only as the capital, but defined much of the culture of the nation.⁶¹ For years not one Evangelical inhabited a pulpit in London, and only with the use of lectureships and propriety chapels did they begin to gain a foothold there.

⁶¹ See Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain* (esp. pgs. 118-120), for a fuller description of the hegemonic role played by London during the eighteenth century.

The now famous struggles of William Romaine as, for a time, the lone Evangelical Anglican in a London parish need not be reiterated here. His struggles have certainly been embellished for the sake of evangelical hagiography.⁶² But Romaine and those who came to hear his Sunday evening lecture were faced with opposition from the start. Not until Romaine was established as the rector of St. Andrew's and St. Anne's, Blackfriars, in 1766, an appointment which had to make its way through legal challenges, was he able to preach uninhibited.

What was to become one of the principal strongholds of London Evangelicalism was a chapel attached to the Lock Hospital, a hospital built for the treatment of venereal diseases in the 1740s. The Lock Hospital receives mention in that notorious publication listing eighteenth-century London prostitutes, *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies*.⁶³ The "list" was a bestseller in multiple editions for over thirty-eight years and included the names, locations, and prices of London's "ladies of pleasure." The Lock Hospital was the seat of Martin Madan's ministry in London from 1755 to 1780, and under his supervision a long list of Evangelical clergy served as curates and chaplains. Madan was a prolific author and scholar whose work included numerous hymns, translations of Juvenal and Persius, and more traditional evangelical treatises such as those written on the doctrine of justification by faith.⁶⁴ Only after Madan's 1780 publication

⁶² The story of Romaine's struggles was early on made part of the Evangelical canon. Evangelical Anglican Thomas Haweis wrote his biography of Romaine, *The Life of William Romaine, M. A.: Late Rector of St. Ann's, Blackfriars, and Lecturer of St. Dunstan's*, as early as 1797.

⁶³ For a recent reprint see Hallie Rubenhold, *The Harlot's Handbook: Harris's List* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing Limited, 2007). Rubenhold's edition contains a helpful introduction to the work, the full text of the 1793 edition, and selections from the editions of 1761-1791.

⁶⁴ See among Madan's works: *Justification by works, and not by faith only, stated, explained, and reconciled with*

Thelyphthora; or, a Treatise on Female Ruin, in its Causes, Effects, Consequences, Prevention, and Remedy, that called for the legalization of polygamy was Madan forced to resign.⁶⁵ Madan believed that biblical polygamy could be used as a means to get women off of the streets. As an avid writer, he retired and spent the last decade of his life writing on the fringes of the Revival.⁶⁶

The Lock Hospital chapel served as a way-station for many Evangelical clergy without parochial appointments. Securing the rectorship of a parish or chapel not only gave an Evangelical power over the local church, pulpit, and liturgical practices, but provided curacies for the newly-trained Evangelicals graduating from Oxford and Cambridge. Without these curacies, and seen in light of recurrent episcopal opposition to the ordination of those with evangelical or “methodistical” tendencies, the Evangelical movement within the Church of England would have come to a quick end. Curacies at Haworth, St. Ann’s, Blackfriars, Clapham, and the Lock Hospital provided stepping-stones for those who in the next century would become the leaders of a powerful church party. The Lock Hospital curates included clergy such as Charles Edward de Coetlogon, who would later become chaplain to the Lord Mayor; John Crosse, a convert of Methodism who almost joined the Wesleyans over opposition to his evangelical preaching within the Church; and Thomas Haweis, a leading Evangelical voice who came to the Lock Hospital after

justification by faith, without works. Being the substance of a sermon on James ii. 24. preached at St. Vedast's Church, Foster-Lane, February 8, 1761 (London: 1761); *A treatise on Christian faith, extracted and translated from the Latin of Hermannus Witsius* (London:1761); and *A scriptural comment upon the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England* (London: 1772).

⁶⁵ Madan had been for years an advocate for women who desired to leave prostitution. See his *Account of the Triumphant Death of F. S. A Converted Prostitute, Who Died April 1763, Aged Twenty-Six Years* (London: 1763).

⁶⁶ The disastrous reception of Madan’s *Treatise on Female Ruin* did not stop him from continuing to promote his controversial ideas. In 1782 he plunged head-first back into the debate that had cost him so much by writing his *Letters on Thelyphthora: With An Occasional Prologue and Epilogue* (London).

opposition to his curacy at St. Mary, Magdalene, Oxford.

London was not entirely devoid of an Evangelical presence in this period. Those who would trumpet the life of William Romaine, however important he is to the rise of Anglican Evangelicalism, and the opposition he endured often make it appear that he spent his entire ministry as a lone voice in the ecclesiastical wilderness of London's steeple-dominated skyline. The picture of Evangelicalism in London throughout the period is made to appear more desolate than it actually was. To be sure, London was no stronghold of Evangelicalism like those found in Cornwall and Yorkshire. In order to find fellowship with those of a similar mind the London Evangelicals had to stay connected to clergymen outside of the capital. Romaine, for instance, visited Samuel Walker in Cornwall for encouragement, and according to Walker's correspondence with Adam would have left the Church had it not been for Walker.⁶⁷ But there were sparks of Evangelical fervency in London during this period. Thomas Jones who was converted in 1754 and served as the chaplain to the Bishop of London is a perfect example. For a few years he, like Romaine, was the only beneficed Evangelical in the capital. However, Jones was not alone in London throughout his entire ministry. Martin Madan knew Jones and even preached his funeral sermon in June of 1762.⁶⁸ Thomas Broughton, an Oxford Methodist, was another London Evangelical and served as Secretary of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, and

⁶⁷As recorded in Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 178.

⁶⁸ See Martin Madan, *A Funeral Sermon on the Much Lamented Death of the Rev. Mr. Thomas Jones, M. A.* (London: 1762).

from 1755 until his death in 1777 he was rector of All Hallow's, Lombard Street.⁶⁹

All the same, the proportion of the British population living in London and the low number of Evangelical clergy in the area is an indication of Anglican Evangelicalism's place on the fringe of English life. The number of Wesleyan Methodists in London or even those who followed George Whitefield and filled his Spitalfield's Chapel, although impressive compared to other areas of the country during the eighteenth century, should be seen in light of London's expansive population. London was an area of relative evangelical weakness. Walsh has pointed out that the Methodist message found fertile soil outside the hearing of church bells. London's ecclesiastical structure was nothing like the open spaces where Methodism flourished. Neither does it appear to have been entirely open to the very similar message of the Evangelicals. In fact, as late as 1885, the term "Methodist desert" was used to describe the southern counties of England.⁷⁰

As members of a fringe movement, the Evangelicals were in a precarious position as opposition to their message was common. The ecclesiastical hierarchy saw them as little better than dissenters, and even after ordination—a process that could take years—many Evangelicals had difficulty finding livings. Romaine was not the only Evangelical to find opposition when appointed

⁶⁹ Broughton wrote many works intended to serve as a defense of Christianity against Deism and other forms of theological liberalism. These included his *Christianity Distinct from the Religion of Nature, In Answer to a Late Book, Entitled, Christianity as Old as the Creation* (London: 1732), *The Inspiration of the New Testament Asserted: The Integrity of the Sacred Writers Vindicated* (London: 1739) and *A Defense of the Commonly-Received Doctrine of the Human Soul* (Bristol: 1766). One of his most popular works was *The Christian Soldier: Or, The Duties of a Religious Life Recommended to the Army, from the Example of Cornelius: in a Sermon* (London: 1738). This work went through eight editions by 1800. It is noteworthy in that one of the major avenues of Methodist expansion was through the conversions of so many in the military. See Hempton, *Methodism*, 20-21.

⁷⁰ See W. W. Pocock, *History of Wesleyan Methodism in Some of the Southern Counties of England* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1885). Also, for a larger picture of English religious geography, see J. D. Gay, *The Geography of Religion in England* (London: Duckworth, 1971).

to a parish. Thomas Haweis encountered a similar situation in Northamptonshire that broke out into a public pamphlet war.⁷¹

From time to time, these men attracted large crowds and filled churches, but their status within the eyes of the establishment made many of their converts uneasy about the prospects of following their footsteps within the Established Church. Thus, fear of making dissenting ministers was common among these early Evangelical leaders.⁷² Evangelicals were commonly accused of making dissenters, and in many cases the accusation was accurate. Yates has written that “without the Evangelical Revival it is likely that ‘old dissent’ would have been in terminal decline by 1815.”⁷³

⁷¹See the case of the parish in Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire where Haweis was initially kept from the living for his Evangelical tendencies. Primary sources for the episode include: Martin Madan, *An Answer to a Pamphlet, Intituled, a Faithful Narrative of Facts Relative to the Late Presentation of Mr H-s, to the rectory of Al- W-le, in Northamptonshire* (London: Printed for E. & C. Dilly, J. Robson and J. Matthews, 1767), and Thomas Haweis, *A Supplement; Or, the Second Part of an Epistolary Correspondence Relative to the Living of Aldwinkle. Containing Several Important Letters, Now Forced to be Made Public to Vindicate Injured Characters, and to Undeceive the Friends of Religion* (London: Printed for J. Wilkie; and J. Walker, 1768). It should be noted that both of these sources were printed after Haweis had attained the living in 1764. He would remain there until his death in 1820.

⁷²The ministry of Charles Simeon, which took place predominantly after the period under discussion here, can be seen in many ways as a response to this tendency to produce dissenters through an Evangelical ministry. See especially, H. C. G. Moule, *Charles Simeon* (London: Methuen & Co., 1892), William Carus, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. C. Simeon* (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1846), Arthur Pollard and Michael Hennell, *Charles Simeon (1759-1836): Essays Written in Commemoration of his Bi-Centenary by Members of the Evangelical Fellowship for Theological Literature* (London: SPCK, 1959), and Charles Smyth, *Simeon and Church Order: A Study of the Origins of the Evangelical Revival in Cambridge in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940).

⁷³Yates, *Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 62. Watts makes the same claim in his two-volume work on the history of dissent. Rupp provides an alternative reading of the new rise of dissent, calling the theory that the Evangelical Revival gave dissent new birth “a half truth” (*Religion in England*, 486). What he does not provide, however, is the full defense that such a statement would require. His argument that revivals and dissenting academies untouched by evangelicalism gave rise to dissent’s rise in the later part of the century does not fully address the dearth of dissent before the Revival and the blossoming of it afterward and in many of the locales where evangelicalism made great inroads. Walsh, for instance, claims that Methodism gave life to pockets of dissent, some of which remained in Methodism and others which did not. A perfect example of this would be John Bennet’s work in the north of England and his societies’ history with Wesleyan Methodism.

The prospect of making dissenters simply fueled the fear that Evangelicalism would ultimately find itself on the outside of the Church it meant to reform, and be further relegated from a fringe movement of the Church to a fringe movement of the culture at large.⁷⁴ Charles Wesley's continual cry against actions taken by Wesleyan Methodists that appeared to take them further afield from the regular ministry of the Church of England was commonplace among the Evangelicals working within the structures of the Establishment's parochial system.⁷⁵

Henry Venn saw firsthand how his ministry within the Established Church produced dissenting ministers. Hylson-Smith wrote that out of Venn's ministry in Huddersfield "came twenty-two ordinands with working-class backgrounds," all of whom were unable to gain admittance to a university and who were subsequently "lost to the Church of England."⁷⁶ It was this loss of clerical candidates that was at the heart of the launch of the Evangelical Elland Society, whose purpose was to promote and fund the education of Evangelical Anglicans seeking orders.⁷⁷ Venn, as one of the key supporters of the Elland Society, became influential in the lives of the next generation of Evangelical leaders while at his new post in Yelling. Yelling's proximity to Cambridge, the Evangelical university of choice in the later part of the century, enabled Venn to be instrumental in the lives of William Farish, Thomas Robinson, John Flavel, Charles Jerram,

⁷⁴As an example of the creation of dissent out of the work of established clergy, both Samuel Walker's and Thomas Haweis's parishes spawned dissenting congregations following their departures.

⁷⁵See Charles Wesley, *An Epistle to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, by Charles Wesley, Presbyterian of the Church of England* (London: 1755).

⁷⁶Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England*, 47.

⁷⁷ The papers of the Elland Society are soon to be published with an introduction by John Walsh.

and Charles Simeon, the latter one of the greatest leaders of the next generation. Venn's congregation at Huddersfield, however, left the Church after Venn left the parish.⁷⁸

The rising number of Evangelical clergy was essential to the survival of Evangelicalism, for at its very core it was a movement attached to the structures of the Church. Walsh has written that "only when it could capture some of the ordinands pumped out annually along the parochial arteries of the Church, could Anglican Evangelicalism make very much headway."⁷⁹ More importantly, as Walsh notes, the number of Evangelicals and their own security within the establishment were intimately connected.

As the number of Evangelicals grew, so did their self-confidence and loyalty to the Church. They no longer despaired of Anglicanism as a Church populated by 'heathenish priests and mitred infidels'. They were less inclined to accept the embraces of Methodists, or to copy their irregular methods. They were more hopeful that the leaven of the Gospel would permeate the Anglican lump."⁸⁰

The ever-growing fraternity of Evangelical clergymen brought familiarity and normality to the once rag-tag band. These earliest Evangelicals' concern for clerical recruits was yet another indication that they envisioned their ministry within the Church from the very beginning.

Revivalists for the Church

This Evangelical fraternity depended, regardless of geography, on an Evangelical network made possible by clerical organizations, letters, itinerancy, and to some extent the work of

⁷⁸Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England*, 47-48. For a fuller description of Venn's life and ministry see John Venn, *Memoir of the Rev Henry Venn* (London: John Hatchard and Son, 1834).

⁷⁹J. D. Walsh, "The Anglican Evangelicals in the Eighteenth Century," 90-91.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 91.

aristocrats converted to their message. Opposition to the movement was found in numerous quarters of the ecclesiastical landscape. Bishops, as has already been noted, were not attracted to the idea of ordaining them. Yet this disdain for evangelical theology and practice was not confined to the clerical elite. The Evangelicals met opposition from nearly every corner of English society. This opposition fueled a fear among Evangelicals in the Church that they would ultimately create a dissenting movement within the Church itself. Driven by this fear, the clerical organizations that they founded to create and sustain fraternal bonds specified rules identifying membership in the society as recognition of and participation in the Established Church and its practices.⁸¹ Wesley claimed similar restrictions and ultimately failed to convince his Methodists of the essential connection of the United Societies and the Church of England. Yet the spirit in which the Evangelicals promoted their cause differed from Wesley's at this point precisely because they refused to envision their work apart from the larger efforts of the Church.

Plunging themselves into the maelstrom of a Latitudinarian-dominated Church in post-Civil War England was no act of Evangelical cowardice, however. The evangelical movement was seen as dangerous. The Evangelicals were the closest, and therefore easiest, targets of Anglican concern over conversionist theology and practice. While Whitefield and Wesley were the most noted purveyors of a conversionistic theology, the Evangelical clergy, connected so much more intimately to the power structures of the Church, were likely to face hardships to which Wesley and Whitefield were immune. Some Evangelicals such as William Jesse came from aristocratic

⁸¹ See the rules of Samuel Walker's societies and clerical bands in Samuel Walker, *Fifty Two Sermons, on the Baptismal Covenant, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and Other Important Subjects ... To Which is Prefixed a Preface*, 2 vols. (London, 1763), 1:xxx.

stock and had no reason to worry about the clash between their message and their means. Most were not in Jesse's situation, but served as curates or perpetual curates with limited incomes. Walker, for instance, was the perpetual curate of the parish at Truro. Yet, it was this group of Evangelicals that Wesley saw himself connected to, and even more so his brother.

CHAPTER THREE

JOHN WESLEY: EVANGELICAL ANGLICAN

O Lord, raise up (we pray thee) thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through the satisfaction of thy Son our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

Collect for the Fourth Sunday in Advent

At the launch of the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley in 1974, Albert Outler delivered an address to a gathering of international scholars at Drew University entitled “The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition.” In his talk Outler lauded Wesley as “the most important Anglican theologian of the eighteenth century.” He began his address in trepidation, however, noting that to “write synoptically of John Wesley’s place in the Christian Tradition in a single essay is a bit intimidating.”⁸² The current chapter attempts to place John Wesley within the international scope of the Evangelical Revival, a task less mammoth than Outler’s, but one in which the tangential nature of the Revival and the controversy surrounding Wesley’s evangelical conversion, should give any author pause. Wesley’s conversion, his Aldersgate experience, needs to be seen within the larger sweep of the Evangelical Revival. Situating Wesley’s conversion within the context of the Revival enables the historian to see Wesley’s place among the evangelicals of his day, and the common mission and divisions elicited from their shared religious experiences.

⁸² Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden, *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 76.

In any work which attempts to place Wesley in the context of his Evangelical colleagues—and in the case of the present work, among those who worked within the parochial structures of the Church of England—Wesley’s entrance into evangelicalism is of prime concern. The evangelical conversion stories that were so common among the early evangelicals helped not only to spread the evangelical message, but to give this international movement a common language that would bridge geography and ecclesiology.⁸³ Wesley scholars have rarely attempted to see Wesley or his conversion within the over-arching context of the Revival, and yet it is by such a placement of Wesley within the larger world of the Revival that one begins to see Wesley the evangelical and the forces that shaped his evangelical impulse. Such a placement also highlights the underlying currents that eventually aided his ultimate separation from so many of his Evangelical colleagues within the Church of England.

That the term “Evangelical” had multiple layers of meaning in the middle part of the eighteenth century in England was made clear in the last chapter. Within the emerging and tumultuous world of the Evangelical Revival, a world that was just beginning to form a core set of leaders, the common experience that set evangelicals of all stripes apart was their experience of conversion or spiritual crisis. Bruce Hindmarsh described this common experience when he wrote that “The consequence of the shared experience of conversion on the part of these leaders was that

⁸³ This common language and inter-denominational appeal can be seen clearly in the response to Jonathan Edwards’ *Faithful Narrative* (1737). George Mardsen wrote that, “Edward’s astonishing narrative created an immediate stir. It served as an inspiration for revivals in both Scotland and England.” (*Jonathan Edwards: A Life* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], 172-173).

they discovered a common mission.”⁸⁴ And additionally, that those evangelical leaders “found their identities in their religious experience” and even defined themselves “by telling the stories of their conversions.”⁸⁵

The Aldersgate experience of May 24, 1738 must not only be seen as part and parcel of a larger spiritual movement, but properly as Wesley’s evangelical conversion.⁸⁶ As an evangelical conversion, the question is not whether John Wesley was a Christian before or after that crucial experience. Such a question is not necessary to the historical enterprise, and apart from subjective interpretation, is unanswerable.⁸⁷ Aldersgate was the beginning of Wesley’s evangelical project, and his entrance into the larger workings of the Evangelical Revival. His experience and subsequent personal interpretations of the event provide necessary clues to Wesley’s evangelical pedigree, and yet even these personal accounts should be seen as the initial and then corrective interpretations of an experience that Wesley would attempt come to terms with for the rest of his life. The

⁸⁴ D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 91.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 10. See Hempton, *Methodism*, 60-68, for a description of the place and use of personal stories of conversion and death scenes in the spread of Methodism. These narratives became ubiquitous in publications such as Wesley’s *Arminian Magazine*.

⁸⁶ I emphasize the term “evangelical conversion” in order to stay clear of the theological debates surrounding the moment of Wesley’s “conversion” to Christianity. As will be seen in the remainder of this chapter, I see little benefit to the debates that have surrounded that question. The use of the term “evangelical conversion” is an attempt to remain within the confines of what can objectively be said about the Aldersgate experience and the effect of the experience.

⁸⁷ Within the context of the Church of England in which Wesley was raised, the question of whether or not one was a Christian would have been directly related to baptism. Modern evangelicalism, mostly devoid of Anglicanism’s sacramental theology, has been perplexed by the nature of Wesley’s “conversion” in part because of an inability to place Wesley within the context of his Anglican heritage.

evangelical movement was marked, and would continue to be marked, by the various and sometimes divergent interpretations of these transformational episodes.⁸⁸

In contrast to many current interpretations of the Aldersgate experience, it is my argument that the experience is best seen from the perspective of the larger picture, rather than through an analysis of the minutiae of the event and its initial aftershocks. Placing the Aldersgate experience in conjunction with similar experiences of conversion, and the social and geographical movements that took place during the period, provides the reader with insight not only into the felt spontaneity of the experience, but also the centrality of the experience for the beginning of Wesley's revivalistic efforts. Such an interpretation requires the interpreter to take a broad view, and thus to step back from the textual account given in Wesley's public *Journal* and the scattered corrections of the account he provided in later years. This is required not to negate the importance of textual evidence, but in order to see that evidence within its larger context.

Looking at Wesley's evangelical conversion experience provides the key to understanding his evangelical, or evangelistic, impulse. Ironically, debates over the meaning of Wesley's Aldersgate experience, especially among Methodist scholars, tend to locate the episode in isolation. Within this isolation it becomes possible to find ways to create an Aldersgate paradigm that looks

⁸⁸ The theological divide between Arminians and Calvinists was, at its root, a differing interpretation of the experience of conversion. See Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, 50-51 in which John Newton is quoted as arguing that Calvinism is the logical theological rationale for the evangelical experience of conversion. Henry Venn made a similar claim when he wrote that his Calvinism came from "a practical sense of his own unworthiness." (*The Letters of Henry Venn*, 31-32). Also, for a discussion of the effect of this emphasis on a conversion experience on later generations and issues of generational transmission, see Glen Alton Messer II, "Restless for Zion: New England Methodism, Holiness, and the Abolitionist Struggle, Circa 1789-1845," Boston University School of Theology, Th.D. thesis, 2006, esp. pg. 122.

more and more like the High Church, Low Church, or revivalist inclinations of the modern interpreter.⁸⁹ Wesley's Aldersgate experience must be understood, as the Revival itself, as an episode that was a part of a larger Pietistic movement that swept the Trans-Atlantic world. Apart from that international sweep, the episodes of the Revival lose their meaning and become fodder for an historiographical approach that feeds sectarian and nationalistic bias.

To a large extent, Wesley retained his High Church theological tendencies, even after his evangelical awakening.⁹⁰ J. Ernest Rattenbury wrote in the first part of the last century:

There is no greater mistake than to suppose that Wesley ceased to be a High Churchman after 1738. The popular argument that the Wesley before 1738 and after were two different men, with different views, is a modern Methodist myth which serious investigation proves to be without foundation. There were certain puerilities of his early ministry which Wesley outgrew, and the importance of certain beliefs and practices were seen in a new perspective, not merely by the illumination of his conversion, but by his practical experiences and busy occupation with affairs.⁹¹

This does not set him apart from every Evangelical. Thomas Adam had similar sympathies, as did many a warmed-hearted Oxonian where High Churchmanship has often found a home. Yet Wesley's High Churchmanship offers a clue to his distinctiveness from the group taken as a whole,

⁸⁹ Scholars from the late nineteenth century provide the most obvious example of this reading. See Tyerman *Life of John Wesley* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1872) for a dissenting/Low Church reading. See D. Urlin, *The Churchman's Life of Wesley* (New York: the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1880) for a High Church reading. More recently, see A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart, John Wesley: Evangelist* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1967, 1978) for a Revivalist/Wesleyan Holiness reading of the Aldersgate experience.

⁹⁰ Writing in 1938, J. Ernest Rattenbury wrote that, "About seventy years ago Dr. J.H. Rigg, in opposition to [the view that Wesley was a high churchman] seems to have been chiefly responsible for the quite undemonstrable but popular modern Methodist opinion, that John Wesley changed from a High Church sacramentalist in 1738 to an evangelical preacher. This antithesis is really meaningless, and the references that Dr. Rigg made to Wesley's sacramentalism are often misleading," (*The Conversion of the Wesleys* [London: The Epworth Press, 1938], 216-217). The debates in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries over Wesley's churchmanship often hinged on a particular author's view of the Oxford Movement.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 175-176

and will be discussed in terms of its political and theological implications in a later chapter.⁹² What united Wesley to his Evangelical colleagues was that he, like them, was swept up into something much larger than himself, a larger movement that neither he nor they were ever able to grasp in its entirety. In this early period of the Revival, Wesley's evangelical perspective is made clear by his own experience of conversion, the message of his field preaching, and the liturgical community he began to create within the Church of England as *ecclesia in ecclesiola* in response to that overpowering exposure to experiential Christianity.

The Evangelical Sweep

There has been a recent push among scholars of the Evangelical Revival in England, especially by John Walsh, in a certain sense to free the Revival from captivity to the British Isles.⁹³ W. Reginald Ward's work, following in the footsteps of W. Frank Swift and others, exposed not only an international, but an intercontinental—both European and North American—evangelical movement marked by ideological and physical movement. His work has opened up to the scholar

⁹² The High Church designation in the eighteenth century can largely be ascribed to those who gave preferential treatment in their arguments to the Church Fathers. The term is often confused with the later characteristics of the nineteenth-century Tractarians. In terms of High Church political ambitions, the battles between Catholic and Reformed elements within English culture are well known. From Henry VIII up to Victoria's reign, the arguments between High and Low Churchmen, and their dissenting partners, were enmeshed in both competing political and theological perspectives.

⁹³ See especially John Walsh's essay, "Methodism and the Origins of English-Speaking Evangelicalism," in Mark A. Noll, George A. Rawlyk, and David W. Beggington, eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies in Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond 1700-1900* (New York: Oxford University press, 1994).

of the Revival in England an historiographical approach to the sweep of evangelical revivalism from the Alps to the Appalachians.⁹⁴

Ward's sweeping Trans-Atlantic evangelical narrative provides an historiographical underpinning to interpret properly the importance of Aldersgate. This evangelical sweep, according to Ward, was propelled out of the pressure-cooker of Central European political and religious conflict created by the clash of Lutheran Orthodoxy and a resurgent Tridentine Roman Catholicism.⁹⁵ It was this conflict that, in the case of the Protestant Salzburger diaspora of 1729, inadvertently spread a form of pietistic religion well beyond the Pietist strongholds of Halle and Teschen. Ward argues that the beginning of the populist religious movement known as the Evangelical Revival can be traced to Pietism, and specifically to its metamorphosis in the face of political initiatives that caused Pietists to move across Europe and even the Atlantic in search of warmer ecclesiastical climates.

Pietism itself was created in ecclesiastical tension. According to Ward, the movement known as Pietism began as a response to the critical response of many to Philip Spener's *Pia Desideria*. They were, in a sense, led to the formation of a group of opposition to the opposition.⁹⁶ Spener's ideas of *collegia pietatis* initially found favor in Saxony and among Leipzig theologians. His hope of bringing reform to theological training spearheaded a lay-led movement which turned

⁹⁴ For another view of this sweep which takes seriously Ward's work see Hempton, *Methodism*, esp. 13-16, 46, and Hempton, *The Church in the Long Eighteenth Century* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 40-45.

⁹⁵ Ward, *The Evangelical Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 16.

⁹⁶ Ward, *Christianity Under the Ancien Regime, 1648-1789*, 77.

from Aristotelian logic, a bulwark of both Roman Catholic and Lutheran theological education, to an emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. Ward writes that this turn toward a universal priesthood led the newly-formed Pietists well beyond Spener's original intentions.⁹⁷

Persecution in Leipzig did not squelch this lay-led drive for piety in the face of then-current staunch orthodoxies, but served to spread the movement further. In turn, opposition to Spener's efforts led his followers to achieve group cohesion apart from established ecclesiastical structures. The movement Spener started, much like the movement John Wesley would later start in England, was not as wedded to the ecclesiastical structures he had wished to reform and eventually as it gained an independent ethos became distinct from them.

When Pietism met face-to-face with the stark realities of religious persecution, the ensuing explosion of geographical displacement, revival, and expansion spearheaded a revivalistic movement that appears to have revived the Protestant world. The inertia initially caused by its Reformations had been slowly losing steam. To a Protestant world going through a form of ecclesiastical depression, the unfortunate circumstances of the displaced Pietists gave it an issue around which to form a rallying cry. The efforts of a Jesuit-inspired Roman Catholic resurgence had dramatically cut into Protestant numbers in the post-Tridentine period. Ward writes that "everyone knew that the Protestants had lost perhaps half their numerical strength; and almost every change seemed to be for the worse."⁹⁸ J. C. D. Clark described the situation in terms of a Roman Catholic Counter Reformation that on the European continent was "everywhere on the

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 16.

offensive” with “Protestantism in retreat, and Protestants subject to the most lurid fears for the future.”⁹⁹ Protestant malaise was felt from Prussia to the American colonies. As Roman Catholicism spread across the globe along the rapid political rise of both the Spanish and Portuguese colonial enterprises, Protestantism had not only stalled by the eighteenth century but declined on account of forces both internal and external.¹⁰⁰ The Catholic “menace” that terrorized the Protestant imagination, however, was caught up in its own struggles both within the church and among the Catholic powers. The imagined Roman threat far outpaced the actual threat of Jesuit efforts within the strongholds of Protestant Germany and England, although its power to unite Protestantism was as real as the actual threat was imaginary.¹⁰¹

The newly-united Protestant voice of opposition to Roman Catholic persecution of the Pietists not only led to the Swedish invasion of Central Europe under Charles XII on a crusade to “save Protestantism,” but also, and more importantly to the topic at hand to the outbreak of

⁹⁹Clark, *English Society*, 67.

¹⁰⁰ Some missiologists argue that Protestant theological interest in predestination also created an anti-missionary spirit within it that kept it out of the mission fields where Roman Catholics found fertile soil for native conversions. This, in turn, fed the already depressed mood of European Protestantism as it began to feel more and more the minority. See Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity, Volume 2: The Reformation to the Present Day* (New York: Harper Collins, 1985), 208. See also Andrew Porter, *Religion Verses Empire?: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), especially pgs. 17-20 and the first page of the preamble to the charter of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which specifically emphasizes the danger of English colonists being caught up in “Popish superstition and idolatry.”

¹⁰¹ Ward calls the Jacobites—who would make two attempts to overthrow the Hanoverians during the first half of the eighteenth century and who held prominent positions in Oxford, Manchester, and throughout Scotland—a real “menace.” See Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 17. See James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford, 1985) for Protestant efforts in New England to combat Jesuit influence from Canada.

religious revival oftentimes attached to movement.¹⁰² As those displaced by religious persecution trudged across the landscape local revivals sprang up with their passing cadence. And with the rise of print culture and voluminous letter writing across confessional, national, and continental lines by those interested in populist religious movements, the story of the bewildered experientialists spread like wildfire.¹⁰³

Just as print material had been essential to the spread of Luther's criticism of Roman Catholic practices during the period of the Reformations, the printed word and the rise of letter-writing propelled the message of experiential religion. One famous print that left a lasting impression on European Protestantism is the image of a displaced Salzburg woman trudging through the muddy roads with eyes set on a new home, a child under one arm, and her Luther Bible firmly clasped under the other. Ward writes that in Germany "by reprint, quotation and reference, as far away as America, the language of hyperbole, if not of miracle, was standard form. The newspaper press had a field day, and sermons and pamphlets are reckoned to have run to 500 titles."¹⁰⁴

The print culture of early eighteenth-century Europe and North America would play an essential role in the spread of Pietism and evangelicalism.¹⁰⁵ Outler even argues that Wesley's

¹⁰² See the effects of movement on trans-Atlantic Methodism in Hempton's *Methodism*, especially his chapter, "Competition and Symbiosis."

¹⁰³ Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 105-106.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁰⁵ See Isabel Rivers, ed., *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982) and *Books and their Readers in the Eighteenth Century: New Essays* (New York: Continuum, 2001).

encounter with Jonathan Edwards' description of the revival in New England may be as pivotal to Wesley's development as the Aldersgate experience itself!¹⁰⁶ While such a claim may be hyperbolic, it does remind the student of the period of the essential role of print materials, and especially those which described the experience of others, for the spread of the movement. Wesley, perhaps even more so than his Anglican colleagues, understood the importance of printing experiential accounts of personal transformation.¹⁰⁷ Conversion, it appears, often accompanied accounts of evangelical experience.¹⁰⁸

Hindmarsh describes the "voluminous correspondence of the evangelicals" as the "paper parallel to their restless itinerancy," thus linking both written and homiletical discourse as part and parcel of the same common evangelistic impulse.¹⁰⁹ These letters, periodicals, and pamphlets were all part of the fiery spread of evangelical heart religion through print media that further propelled the stories of both Pietist oppression and movement, but also the transformative experiences of evangelicals and Pietists alike who encountered this new movement. Susan O'Brien has written specifically about the correspondence which arose among Calvinist evangelicals of the time which,

¹⁰⁶ Albert Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 15. See also Mardsen, *Jonathan Edwards*, 173.

¹⁰⁷ For example, Wesley's continued printing of Methodist death accounts can only rightly be seen as an evangelistic tool to spread an evangelical theology of experience and assurance. Such assurance of salvation, based often on the experience of the New Birth, was said to give Methodists peace even in the face of death.

¹⁰⁸ As an example, see Mark Noll's description of the impact of Jonathan Edwards' *Faithful Narrative*, and especially its publication in London, in *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Drovers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 90-92. In terms of the Wesleys' conversions themselves, John's conversion was spurred on by Charles' conversion three days previous, and both of the Wesleys were spurred on by George Whitefield's conversion experience. For a description of Whitefield's conversion, see Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 26-29.

¹⁰⁹ Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 74.

she argues, helped to create a trans-Atlantic evangelical consciousness. This consciousness was encouraged by print culture, but specifically through personal correspondence that not only promoted the creation of evangelical networks, but also spread the message of the movement. “Minister and lay promoters extended the correspondence into a reliable, nonpersonal system of contacts, which they developed into a number of procedures for spreading the news from individuals to groups committed laity and beyond to a wider lay audience.”¹¹⁰ O’Brien saw this system of contacts grow in importance as isolated correspondents were able to discuss practical and theological issues with like-minded evangelicals from across the geographical territory covered by the evangelical sweep. O’Brien even claims that “it is not too much to say that through the exchange of ideas and materials Calvinist revivalists of the mid-eighteenth century built a ‘community of saints’ that cut across physical barriers and, on occasion, theological divisions.”¹¹¹

Ward summarizes the powerful impact of revivalistic narrative and literature when describing the anticipation that grew out of awareness of the Salzburgers’ plight:

The religious shock administered by the Salzburgers’ march across Europe was tremendous. The simple knowledge that they were coming inspired “moving awakenings” (*bewegliche Erweckungen*); the enthusiasts who stood at the fountainhead of religious revival in the west of the Empire now held that the secret increase of the hidden kingdom of God had reached the point where outbreaks might be expected anywhere.¹¹²

This “simple knowledge” was a key component as the experiential nature of the Revival appeared to be replicable through various means of communication whether this communication was made

¹¹⁰ Susan O’Brien, “A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755,” *The American Historical Review*, 91 (Oct., 1986), 813.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 106.

through something as personable as a private letter or through the efforts of a leading evangelist speaking to the masses gathered to hear the narrative of evangelical transformation in the English countryside.¹¹³

Movement and Fervor

Movement itself has been seen recently as one of the major factors that propelled the rise of the Evangelical Revival and made possible its sweeping international reach. David Hempton describes a triangle composed of the Pietist strongholds of Halle and Teschen, London and Oxford, and Colonial Georgia as the three corners of an evangelical frontier in which religious experience was traded much like a commodity. He writes that in the early part of the eighteenth century “an unlikely combination of Moravian and Anglican enthusiasm for mission on the frontier of Britain’s new American empire soon opened up a more benign religious version of the infamous triangular trade of slavery and cotton that fueled the economics of empire.”¹¹⁴ Hempton’s description of Methodism as an “Empire of the Spirit” can easily be ascribed to the work of evangelicalism within and without Wesley’s authoritarian reach.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ See, for example, William Grimshaw’s conversion narrative in William Myles, *The Life and Writings of the Revd. William Grimshaw* (London: Printed at the Conference Office, by Thomas Cordeaux, 1813). Grimshaw was converted by hearing the sermon of a lay preacher.

¹¹⁴ Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 13.

¹¹⁵ Although in Hempton’s work, the “empire” that Wesley built is much more easily identifiable in that Wesley and his ecclesiastical heirs built a movement and subsequent church structure in line with the organizational characteristics of empires.

Wesley visited one corner of Hempton's evangelical triangle and lived in the other two. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel formed in 1701 brought both John and Charles Wesley to the American colonies, and it is en route to their appointments that the brothers first encountered Moravianism.¹¹⁶ The Wesleys, however, were not devoid of experiential religion before this encounter with Pietism.¹¹⁷ The idea that Wesley was brought up in the Church of England with a bland form of religious piety is as erroneous as it is so easily and often promoted by those wishing to create an evangelical Wesley based on a current and thus anachronistic definition of the term. The dying words of John and Charles's father, Samuel Wesley, Sr., spoke to the centrality of experience in the Christian life when he said that the "inward witness" was "the strongest proof, of Christianity."¹¹⁸

Yet it was in the religious and cultural smorgasbord of early colonial Georgia, and even in the colonies in general, that Wesley first encountered a form of experiential religion that challenged the very basic definition of "Christian" for the Oxford don turned frontier missionary.¹¹⁹ Ward writes that "virtually all the clergy serving in America (outside New England)

¹¹⁶ John Wesley, *Journals and Diaries I (1735-1738)*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, Vol. 18 in the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 137.

¹¹⁷ See Original MS letter in which Charles describes his ailing father and the comfort a Christian should have in the face of death. This letter, written three years before Charles Wesley's evangelical conversion, is loaded with the language of experiential religion. Charles Wesley to The Revd Mr Wesley [Samuel, Jr.], Devon; Dated March 25, 1735, from Ch[rist] Church in Wesley Historical Society Library at Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK.

¹¹⁸ John Wesley, *Letters II*, ed. Frank Baker, Vol. 26 in the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 289. Interestingly enough, the Charles Wesley letter of 1735 referenced in footnote 117 conveys a picture of Samuel's death that shows that Samuel's assurance in the face of death as seen in John's 1747 letter was either overstated, or was something which Samuel attained in his last month.

¹¹⁹ See Geordan Hammond, "Restoring Primitive Christianity: John Wesley and Georgia, 1735-37,"

in the early eighteenth century were brought in from abroad, whether from England, Scotland, Ireland, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands or Switzerland.”¹²⁰ Georgia and the Carolinas were prime examples of this clerical diversity of geographical and culture. The Moravian settlement of Wachovia served as a Pietist stronghold in the center of the region, greatly influencing the surrounding Anglicans and dissenters from Britain. Additionally, Roman Catholics in Florida and the Mississippi river valley surrounded English settlements. This made for a form of religious diversity that not only added a non-Protestant element to the religious mix, but also caused concern over the spread of “popery” and the political influence of competing European powers.

During this period, Non-Juror Anglicanism and heart-warmed Moravians of the Pietist diaspora held the attention of Wesley. It would be the amalgamation of High Churchmanship stemming from his upbringing and Oxford days, and heart religion revived in part by the influence of colonial Moravians that would define Wesley’s theological outlook and evangelistic impulses throughout the rest of his life. Walsh described Wesley’s “rubrical High Churchmanship” having been “cross-fertilised by the heart-religion of the Germans.”¹²¹ It was heart religion, however, not High Churchmanship, that propelled Wesley into the fields by 1739 in an effort to reach the masses of England for Christ, and this propulsion only took place subsequent to Wesley’s evangelical conversion. This phenomenon, a High Churchman and Tory acting the part of a

University of Manchester Ph.D. thesis, 2008. Hammond provides the most comprehensive treatment of Wesley’s missionary endeavor in Georgia and particularly Wesley’s intent to create a center of “primitive Christianity” in colonial Georgia.

¹²⁰ Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 5-6.

¹²¹ John Walsh, “John Wesley 1703-1791: A Bicentennial Tribute” (London: Friends of Dr. William’s Library, 1993), 9.

Puritan from the previous century, was only made possible, or even probable, by Wesley's conversion experience.

Although with a tinge of hyperbole, Garth Lean's description of the Aldersgate experience as "Destiny Accepted" rightly connects Wesley's conversion with the evangelical impulse that followed.

While it is true that Wesley's basic characteristics remained constant—such characteristics are generally heightened or re-directed rather than obliterated by conversion—the words "psychological reassurance" seem strangely inadequate to describe the effect on Wesley. For Bready is unquestionably right when he says in his massive study that if Wesley had died in his thirty-fifth year he would have been "an unremembered man—capable, methodical, hard-working, but pedantic, legalistic, irascible; unloved and well-nigh unlovable."¹²²

The sweep of the Evangelical Revival, a revival that caught the attention of John and Charles Wesley, among many others, thrust the Wesleys and their colleagues out, literally, proclaiming a gospel of personal transformation marked by the experience of the New Birth.

Caught Up in the Sweep

An historiographical approach to John Wesley's place in the Revival should begin by locating Wesley within the tangential and equalizing milieu of revivalism. To set Wesley up, for instance, as the father of English evangelicalism¹²³ or as the exclusive father of Methodism as a subset of this larger evangelical narrative, is to miss the larger picture of a revival phenomenon that

¹²² Gareth Lean, *John Wesley, Anglican* (London: Blandford Press, 1964), 34-35.

¹²³ See Balleine's *History of the Evangelical Party*. Balleine begins his history of the movement not with larger inter-continental movements of the Spirit, but with Oxford Methodism, and the meetings held in John and Charles Wesleys' Oxford rooms. This is a standard historiographical interpretation of the rise of evangelicalism in Britain.

should take precedence over the personal narratives of its famed leaders. That they, too, like the single female Methodist of one of Wesley's many bands, were propelled by a conversion experience should not be overlooked. This form of experiential Christianity was sprouting up across the English landscape. Wesley, like his band member, should be seen as a part of a larger egalitarian narrative of revivalistic fervor. John Wesley was caught up in the larger manifestation of evangelical piety and religious experience that defined evangelicalism in the early part of the eighteenth century for all of its participants.

The conversion experience and the propulsion that followed, and was nurtured by other conversionists, marked one as an evangelical in this earliest period of the Revival. The characteristics of the various branches of the larger Revival, even among the English, have their distinctive qualities. The practices of one involved in the various structures of evangelicalism (small group meetings, itineracy, etc.) are also important in order to identify evangelicals. Yet at its most basic form, evangelicalism was a conversionist movement. The basic framework of evangelical identity and practice was the experience of conversion understood by its participants in terms of a New Birth.

Placing Wesley among this larger conversionistic phenomenon rescues the Revival from national or denominational dependency. The characteristics, assumptions, and ecclesiastical loyalties that each person brought with them into this cacophony of revival not only added depth to the inchoate movement, but would provide later points of conflict as the experience of revival met the organizational prowess of the Wesleys, the Church, and dissenting structures such as those

set up by Lady Huntingdon.¹²⁴ Evangelicals within the Church did not take a uniform stance on theology apart from the basic tripartite structure of justification, the new birth, and the need for holy living subsequent to it. That Wesley was a High Churchman and displayed many of the characteristics, both theological as well as ecclesiological, of the Jacobites and Non-Jurors has been thoroughly described by numerous scholars. Ward described Wesley's Jacobite tendencies and the impact of his upbringing within the political context of eighteenth-century Non-Jurors in no uncertain terms:

There is no doubt that this upbringing marked Wesley lifelong. Born into a Jacobite milieu, the younger brother of a (non-Methodist) collaborator of Bishop Atterbury, Wesley did not adopt the world as his parish; indeed his one substantial trip abroad was to a nest of Jacobites in Georgia, headed by General Oglethorpe, who had been christened James Edward for the Old (Jacobite) Pretender.¹²⁵

Debates between Tractarians and Methodists over “rights” to Wesley in the 1870s were grounded in the apparent dichotomy of evangelicalism and High Churchmanship that collided in him.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Wesley even points to the influx of dissenters into Wesleyan Methodism as the principal reason behind Methodism's gradual divergence from the Church of England late in his life. See his sermon “On Attending the Church Service,” *Works*, 3:466. See also in *Works*, Cf. No. 32, 'Sermon on the Mount, XII, I.7 and n.; see also No. 107, 'On God's Vineyard', II.8. For what Outler describes as “the notion that nonconformity was imported into what had been Anglican societies,” c.f. Wesley's letter to Henry Brooke, June 14, 1786.

¹²⁵ Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 119.

¹²⁶ See Rattenbury's comments in *Wesley's Legacy to the World*, especially his chapter, “The Wesleys and Modern Religious Movements.” Full-length biographies such as R. D. Urrill's *the Churchman's Life of Wesley* were written to claim Wesley for the High Church/Anglo-Catholic parties of the later nineteenth century to the horror of many a Methodist.

The Aldersgate Experience

The purpose of this chapter is to assess Wesley the evangelical. It has been assumed that Wesley was an evangelical, and yet Wesley's experience of the life of faith as a maverick Anglican with both High Church and evangelical tendencies often complicates the picture. The obvious place to further pursue such an assessment is Wesley's conversion narrative.

The historian who attempts to delve into the issues surrounding Wesley's Aldersgate experience should do so with trepidation. The theological mud-slinging that has characterized recent discussions of Wesley's Aldersgate experience has primarily exposed sectarian bias.¹²⁷ The question whether Wesley was a Christian or not before the 24th of May 1738 is a loaded question. Aldersgate was a conversion, this is certain. It was John Wesley's evangelical conversion.

Ward stated the case distinctly when he wrote that, "There can be no agreement as to whether Wesley's conversion experience was a conversion or not as long as there is no agreement about what constitutes conversion."¹²⁸ Even the Wesleys altered their basic understanding of conversion, early-on conjoining the conversion experience and that of assurance. In later life they

¹²⁷ Historical-theological analyses of the Aldersgate experience seen apart from, the Aldersgate experience's placement among the many conversions of the period, the larger picture of political and social movements, and the critical objectivity necessary to describe the event, have created or encouraged hagiographical and problematic sketches of Wesley's life. A. Skevington Wood's description of Wesley's Aldersgate as "epoch-making" (*The Burning Heart*, pgs. 59-69), and Rupert Davies description (*Methodism*, pgs. 57-60) of a total change after Aldersgate of Wesley's experiential, psychological, and theological outlook, for example, over-dramatize the experience and all-too easily fit revivalist patterns prevalent in later Methodist practice.

¹²⁸ Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 126. For this very reason, the text of the Aldersgate experience is not laid out in this chapter. The attempt has been to place the experience within the context of the Revival and thus give it, and John Wesley's evangelical pedigree, a rightful place in the story of Wesley's life and of the life of the Revival itself. In regard to the word "conversion," volumes have been written on its definition within the Wesleyan tradition. See, for example, Kenneth J. Collins and John H. Tyson's book, *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), for a collection of essays on this highly debated topic.

saw this as a humorous mistake.¹²⁹ Their description of the Eucharist as a “converting ordinance” is indication that Wesley did not always use the word to indicate a conversion from a non-Christian state to a Christian one. The stories of the English evangelicals’ conversions often describe what should honestly be called a transition from nominal to experiential Christianity. Ward writes that the historian’s task is “to assess what the practical effect of the experience was” and goes on to give a “slightly polemical edge” to Henry Rack’s arguments in *Reasonable Enthusiast* to claim that “Wesley’s conversion was a failed attempt to become a Moravian.”¹³⁰ With blunt wit he writes:

[Wesley’s] failure to become a High-Church Pharisee, and his failure to become a successful working mystic and Indian missionary, has been followed by a failure to undergo a Moravian conversion. In the event this was no great loss, since it is impossible to imagine Wesley and Zinzendorf cooperating in the same religious community for long.”¹³¹

¹²⁹ See Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 393. This change should come as no surprise. Richard Heitzenrater in his article on the Aldersgate text in a volume edited by Randy L. Maddox (*Aldersgate Revisited* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990], 49-91) argues persuasively that Wesley’s Aldersgate experience was his experience of the evangelical doctrine of assurance. I have here argued that in the general sweep of the Evangelical Revival that Aldersgate was Wesley’s “evangelical conversion,” and see no conflict with that terminology and Heitzenrater’s assessment. If the experience of assurance created John Wesley the Evangelical, so be it. Maddox’s volume of essays contains primarily theological-historical attempts to place Wesley’s Aldersgate within the context of Wesley’s life and subsequently in the life of later Methodist Christians. The preface of the work provides the focus of the collection described as questions related to “the dynamic spirituality of Wesley and his early followers” and how “such vital Christian commitments [can] be renewed today.” The book was written in the aftermath of the 250th anniversary of Wesley’s Aldersgate experience and debates within United Methodism. Not all historical-theological analysis has provided such careful reading of texts, and not every essay in the collection is helpful to the historian’s task. What is provided is a fine historical-theological analysis that, seen next to larger histories of evangelical history and social-historical analysis of the period and current religious and political movements, can provide greater understanding of the Aldersgate experience’s importance in the life of early Methodism.

¹³⁰ Ward, *Early Evangelicalism*, 127.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

The marks of these “failed” conversions appear in Wesley’s theological works and practical endeavors throughout his life. The amalgamation of High Church, pietist, and evangelical elements within Wesley would often put him at odds with each of these groups as the Revival unfolded. Ward ultimately locates Wesley’s conversion with his sojourn into field preaching.¹³² Such placement, if seen in conjunction with Wesley’s encounter with international Pietism, his search for assurance, and the Aldersgate event itself would make sense within the milieu of the larger evangelical context. It is the argument of this author that Aldersgate, as shown in its placement in the public *Journal*, should be seen as Wesley’s evangelical conversion experience and the pattern that he promoted throughout his ministry.

H. Bruce Hindmarsh in his book, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, supplies the most comprehensive analysis of the Aldersgate experience within the context of the newly-revived eighteenth century genre of conversion narrative. Taken together with Ward’s concept of an evangelical Trans-Atlantic awakening, Hindmarsh’s analysis provides one of the only interpretations of the event that looks beyond the historical-theological arguments over text analysis.

Hindmarsh begins his work with a discussion of the place of “conversion” in English Christianity in the eighteenth century and particularly the narratives of spiritual autobiography as they fed into the Evangelical Revival. These streams included a “native tradition of Puritan and Nonconformist spiritual autobiography and teaching about conversion” along with British,

¹³² Ibid., 128.

American, and Continental Pietism.¹³³ What Hindmarsh found in his work on evangelical conversion narratives was a “discernable continuity in evangelical experience that recalled Puritan teaching and practice.”¹³⁴ This continuity began to appear in the patterns of the Revival and through the spread of Revival accounts and news through the eighteenth century’s rise of print news, letter writing, and movement. Within the context of expectation surrounding the trans-Atlantic, or world-wide, nature of revival and revivalistic fervor, “narratives of conversion by men and women, leaders and laypeople, published and unpublished, began to multiply.”¹³⁵

Within the context of multiplying evangelical conversion narratives, Wesley’s Aldersgate experience can be seen as one conversion narrative, although an historically significant one, among the many that were popping up in the trans-Atlantic world. Both Noll and Hindmarsh describe the conversions of the leaders of the Evangelical Revival in relative isolation from one another.¹³⁶ Yet the picture of Ward’s “sweep,” Hempton’s picture of pietist/evangelical movement in the period, and the renewal of Puritan patterns of spiritual narrative autobiography as outlined by Hindmarsh, enables the scholar to see an inter-connectedness to what does, in fact, look like episodic conversions. Hindmarsh points out in great detail in his analysis of the conversion narratives of

¹³³ Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 59.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 91, and Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, especially 76-99.

the Evangelical Revival, the way in which evangelical experiences in some enabled or inspired the experiences in those around them, or even in those who simply read their accounts later.¹³⁷

John Wesley's conversion was inspired by his encounter with Peter Böhler and the Moravians, the influence of George Whitefield's 1735 conversion, and his witness to his brother's conversion a week before his own.¹³⁸ These conversions did not happen in isolation, but at the same time had a spontaneity that bucks any attempt to place a restrictive pattern on their inter-relatedness.

What Hindmarsh does with Wesley's *Journal* account of the conversion is to provide text analysis that takes into consideration the structure of the *Journal* itself and the larger streams of piety informing the rise of early evangelicalism in Britain. Wesley's *Journal* was obviously not an autobiography, but provided more or less a polemical narrative of his perspective on the Evangelical Revival and Wesleyan Methodism's place within it.¹³⁹ Hindmarsh describes Wesley's *Journal* as not "a subjective autobiography in any thoroughgoing sense," but one that "contained passages of reflexive narrative and self-interpretation."¹⁴⁰ Ted Campbell described Wesley's *Journal* as "apologetic literature published at very particular moments in his career."¹⁴¹ It is important to

¹³⁷ Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 70.

¹³⁸ See Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*, Sunday, May 21, 1738. Pgs. 106-108.

¹³⁹ See the Introduction to Wesley's *Journal* in the *Works*, 18:37-61.

¹⁴⁰ Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 117.

¹⁴¹ Ted A. Campbell, "John Wesley as Diarist and Correspondent" in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers, eds., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 137.

see the *Journal* text within the controversies that had embroiled Wesley; it was written for a public audience that not only read Wesley's accounts, but also his opponents whom Wesley often replied to through the print *Journal*. Reading the *Journal* apart from its polemical context is akin to the study of Pelagius via the writings of his arch-nemesis Augustine of Hippo.

The episodes that mark the earliest installment of Wesley's *Journal* included: colonial battles over Sophey Hopkey and Wesley's Jacobite-inspired liturgical experiments in Georgia,¹⁴² the William Morgan affair at Oxford, charges of "enthusiasm" from colleagues and ecclesiastical elites, rumors that Wesley was a Papist, the "free grace" controversy that broke out with the followers of Whitefield, and finally the Wesleyan/English Moravian split over quietism. The journal account of Aldersgate was not published until these events were all in the public spotlight.¹⁴³ Within this context, the Aldersgate experience forms the crux of Wesley's first three journal installments, and his own theology of conversion. Hindmarsh notes that:

It is significant that the second *Journal* appeared only four months after the first. No subsequent *Journals* were printed so closely together, and most appeared at intervals of two or three years. The second *Journal* was unmistakably the sequel to the first. That the theme of this second *Journal* would be conversion is evident not only from the motto and from the incompleteness, or even the note of suspense, of the first *Journal*, but also from the manner in which Wesley's experience on 24 May 1738 is set off as momentous, and the fact that this second *Journal* concludes with no less than eleven specimen conversion narratives that Wesley recounts from interviews conducted at Herrnhut.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² See especially, Frank Baker's analysis in *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 39-57.

¹⁴³ See Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 116.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

That Wesley saw Aldersgate in such crucial terms should not be lost to the scholar who is aware of his later corrections to the text. As Hindmarsh writes, Wesley's Aldersgate experience "was not an isolated or passing experience: it was a model."¹⁴⁵ That, as Ward writes, Aldersgate was a "failed" Moravian conversion should also be kept in mind. The international pietistic phenomenon experienced by Wesley and so many others had to be put into the terminology of the Anglican High Churchmanship that continued to be the bedrock of Wesley's theological outlook. Wesley was an English Christian shaped by the history, liturgy, and terminology of English Christianity, no matter how many diverse influences can be found in his writings.¹⁴⁶

A Religious Pollen Factory

In his book, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, Hempton not only provides a social historical account of the rise of trans-Atlantic Methodism, but more importantly to understanding Wesley's conversion, he describes the Fetter Lane Society with which Wesley was affiliated during the time of his evangelical conversion. Hempton describes the society as a "religious pollen factory," an apt description of the volatile nature of early Moravian-influenced English evangelicalism in London and the setting in which Wesley's conversion needs to be seen. This "religious pollen factory" was

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 125.

¹⁴⁶ Such crucial elements of Wesley's theology as his definition of grace can be found in the "Collect for Grace" in the Prayer Book's Morning Prayer service. Even his justification of his irregular ordinations of Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey in 1784 for the Methodist work in America was informed by Anglican authors Stillingfleet and King, and the debates within English Christianity over the nature of clerical orders. To take Wesley out of that Anglican context is to lose much of what ultimately made Wesley the Methodist/Evangelical. The current extremes in Wesley scholarship include both the tendency to make Wesley sound like an Eastern Orthodox theologian and the tendency to reform his image into that of a Continental Protestant.

the local out-post of the larger movement of evangelicalism in its European and American forms, and more specifically that locality which was able to spawn such evangelical luminaries as the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield, among others. Heitzenrater described the Fetter Lane Society as having a soteriological agenda, one where “the spiritual health of the participants” was its primary focus.¹⁴⁷

Hempton’s litany of the characters involved in the Fetter Lane Society rightly points to the religious and geographical conglomeration that was Fetter Lane. The litany includes, “German visitors to London, Calvinist evangelicals, Welsh revivalists, French Prophets, London’s artisan pietists, and English High Churchmen like the Wesleys.”¹⁴⁸ From its inception, Fetter Lane had been at the cross-roads of Pietistic movement. As Colin Podmore makes clear, what led to the founding of the Fetter Lane Society was a visit by four Moravians, three of whom were en route to the Moravian settlement in Georgia, and a fourth who intended to visit “the remnant of a German society founded by Zinzendorf in 1737.”¹⁴⁹ As such the Fetter Lane Society was founded at the cross-roads of pietistic movement. One of these four, Peter Boehler, had been commissioned by Zinzendorf to visit Oxford’s students, thus Boehler’s connection to John Wesley.¹⁵⁰ What Podmore

¹⁴⁷ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 79.

¹⁴⁸ David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 14.

¹⁴⁹ Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England, 1728-1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 30. Podmore’s larger description of the social, religious, and political context in which the Fetter Lane Society was located is very useful to understanding its connection to Wesley and other Evangelicals.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

provides in his description of the Fetter Lane Society and its founding is a description of a fraternal network that would also overlap with the Evangelical fraternity.¹⁵¹

It is within this context of international movement and enthusiasm that Wesley's conversion should first be approached. To approach his conversion as simply the textual account in his *Journal* or the later corrections he imposed on the narrative is to miss the fact that Wesley was swept up by something much larger than he could explain on paper, or even perhaps in words at the time. Hindmarsh asserts that John Wesley's first *Journal* illustrates this movement of people well, "since it was on ship and in remote Georgia in 1736 that Wesley, an English clergyman, was provoked to spiritual anxiety by the questions of believers whose religious fervour had originated deep in central Europe."¹⁵²

Included in this international context, the Wesley brothers' conversions were part of a wave of religious and political shifts. These included fears of deism on one side and a resurgent post-Tridentine Catholicism or English Jacobitism on the other. They also included frustration born of an antiquated ecclesiastical structure in the Church, pamphlets and reports from religious outbursts and persecutions from the Alps to the Appalachians. The intensity of small groups, such as Fetter Lane, spouting an experiential religion that challenged the brothers' assurance of salvation simply added additional spark to a volatile situation. Within the context of England's

¹⁵¹ Podmore's larger description of the context of the Fetter Lane Society is very useful to understanding the connection to Wesley and other Evangelicals. He describes a network of people connected by various means to the Wesleys, Whitefield, James Hutton, or through the Religious Societies that existed in 1730s London and would form the core of the Fetter Lane Society. For Podmore's description of Fetter Lane's connection to these societies see especially, pgs. 34-36.

¹⁵² Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 70.

culture of religious establishment, Wesley's warmed heart was the natural outgrowth of a culture which had reached the boiling point both politically and spiritually, and produced fertile soil for the continental message of heart religion.

The Fetter Lane period of Wesley's life and the "pollen factory" have been described by Rack as "a highly-charged charismatic atmosphere in which [Wesley] thought he saw the scenes of the Acts of the Apostles, reproduced with all the strange gifts of the apostolic age, repeated: not only instant conversion but visions, demon-possession and healing."¹⁵³ The Revd John Clayton, the inspiration behind much of Oxford Methodism's attachment to the practices of the Early Church promulgated by High Churchmen of the time, wrote a letter to Wesley on the very day of his conversion. In the letter, Clayton is concerned that Wesley is showing marks of an enthusiast.

Indeed we are greatly afraid for you, and doubt that you are running yourself into difficulties beyond your strength to bear. We all see and rejoice at your sincerity and zeal, and pray fervently for your perseverance therein. But we think ourselves likewise obliged to beseech Almighty God to give you a right judgment in all things, that so your zeal may be tempered by prudence, and you may have the light of the gospel as well as the heat.¹⁵⁴

Typical of the calls for reason and moderation that mark this period in English history, the letter, written from Salford in the north of England very near the Jacobite stronghold of Manchester, is proof that Wesley's plunge into the world of evangelicalism was becoming public knowledge. Clayton's view is also the view that will come to define more generally Wesley's image in the minds of many a regular parish priest in the Church of England.

¹⁵³ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 187.

¹⁵⁴ John Wesley, *Letters I*, ed. Frank Baker, Vol. 25 in the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 538-539 (Letter to John Wesley from the Revd. John Clayton, Salford [May 1, 1738]).

John Wesley was not the only Wesley brother to receive such pleas from concerned friends. Charles Wesley experienced what he called his “Pentecost” on May 21, 1738. The very next day Charles recorded in his journal that “An old friend called to see me under great apprehensions that I was running mad.”¹⁵⁵ This unnamed friend, likely an Oxford colleague, had not only heard about Charles’s head-first plunge into experiential religion, but pleaded with Charles to leave London. It appears from Charles’ journal that some within the Wesleys’ circle were well aware of the seeming religious zealotry coming out of the Fetter Lane Society. Charles records:

His fears were not a little increased by my telling him the prayer of faith had healed me, when sick at Oxford. ‘He looked to see the rays of light about my head,’ he said, and more to that purpose. I begged him for his own sake not to pass sentence till he had his full evidence concerning me. This he could not promise, but faintly prayed me to flee from London and in despair of me took his leave.¹⁵⁶

Concern for the Wesleys’ spiritual, and even mental, health remained a recurring theme well into the 1770s. This “old friend” represents many who would “pass sentence” on the Wesleys’ brand of evangelical religion. Not all such sentences would be done with such a kind-hearted visit.

Wesley the Evangelical

The Wesleys would not long remain under the influence of Moravianism. The split from Fetter Lane that created the London Foundry in 1739 marks the beginning of what would ultimately become the United Societies under the headship of John Wesley. In a show of Wesley’s

¹⁵⁵ Charles Wesley, *Manuscript Journal*, 1:109.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

lingering High Churchmanship, he would reject what he perceived as the Quietism of English Moravianism.¹⁵⁷

This rejection of Quietism is a symptom of Wesley's perennial insistence on the more Catholic elements within Anglicanism's "*via media*." Augustine's dictum, *Qui creavit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis*,¹⁵⁸ was embraced more fully by Wesley than by the majority of his evangelical contemporaries throughout his life. And yet even this embrace of an Augustinian formula, although Wesley was not always fond of Augustine per se, was a part of his continued attempts to describe the soteriological transformation he saw taking place.

Wesley's High Churchmanship would continue to raise its head, although his practices became an amalgamation of High Church, Pietist, and Puritan influences that may have created a Wesleyan Methodist ethos but left his colleagues in the Church of England confused, distant, or even hostile. An example of his High Churchmanship can be seen in his very use of language to describe his Puritan-inspired use of lay preachers. Most eighteenth-century evangelicals seldom ever used the term "evangelical." Hindmarsh points out that evangelicals "often spoke of the gospel and pressed 'gospel' into service as an adjective."¹⁵⁹ Thus, it was common in the evangelical culture of England to use terms such as "gospel preachers," "gospel sermons" and "gospel conversions." Wesley knew full well that such terms were, as Hindmarsh points out, "equated narrowly with the

¹⁵⁷ See especially Wesley's "To the Moravian Church, More especially that part of it now or lately residing in England," *Works*, 19:115-118.

¹⁵⁸ "God, who created us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves."

¹⁵⁹ Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 14.

Reformers' teaching about atonement and justification by faith."¹⁶⁰ Thus Wesley told his lay preachers that "we are no gospel preachers." His concern lay in what he saw as a lack of emphasis on holy living, and a rejection of humanity's required re-action to God's movement of grace. This is just an example of another area where the nature of Wesley's vision marked him as distinct from the evangelicals as a group. His continued embrace of such elements and the division that followed is the focus of this dissertation.

Wesley was often united with his Evangelical colleagues on key essentials such as the need for New Birth, justification by faith, and holy living. Yet a desultory movement whose identity is based on the experience of a tangential and subjective experience of the Spirit, will inevitably provide varying interpretations of individualistic encounters. Wesley's attempts to describe and then re-produce his own conversion experience put him at odds with others in the movement who found the experience of conversion producing different narratives and differing allegiances to Wesley's connectionalism and drive to perfection. Narratives of human participants with their own geographical, ecclesiastical, political, and social allegiances produced differing interpretations of this central soteriological event, and subsequent division was the outcome.

Wesley would continue to create a Methodist structure that cannot be understood properly apart from his desire to recreate his own understanding of the Aldersgate experience. He felt called by divine fiat to re-create this event in the hearts and minds of those he felt had been left bereft without that transformative experience. That he, nor any of the participants in the Revival,

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

understood the larger sweep and the social causes carrying them into such a counter-cultural movement should come as no surprise. They were united by something larger than themselves, a trans-Atlantic movement that only with hindsight could be grasped. Likewise, their ultimate division would come about by social, political, and theological concerns much larger than their particular spheres, a story that unfolds as Wesley's relationship to his evangelical colleagues unfolds with the historical record of the continued spread of the Revival in national contexts.

CHAPTER FOUR

PROPAGANDA AND POWER: EVANGELICALISM UNDER FIRE

Grant, O Lord, that in all our sufferings here upon earth, for the testimony of thy truth, we may stedfastly look up to heaven, and by faith behold the glory that shall be revealed; and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors by the example of thy first Martyr Saint Stephen, who prayed for his murderers to thee, O blessed Jesus, who stands at the right hand of God to succour all those that suffer for thee, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

-Collect for Saint Stephen's Day

The Evangelical Revival that swept up figures such as the Wesley brothers, Lady Huntingdon, and George Whitefield was not always met with appreciation, or as a benign movement of spiritual piety. To put it bluntly, not everyone in England agreed with John Wesley. And, those who opposed Wesley and this new evangelical work of which he was a part included many of the leading figures of the Church of England, men and women who cared deeply about the Gospel, the future of the Church, and the needs of English society. This chapter will look at the affects of anti-Methodist propaganda on the relationship of John Wesley to his regular Evangelical colleagues. Specifically, it will attempt to describe how anti-Methodist propaganda, in its various forms, helped to create a context in which connection to the Wesley brothers became a liability to Evangelical work within the life of the Established Church.

The Evangelicals within the Church could little afford further stigma than they already received as a result of their own propagation of the New Birth. As such, it is little wonder that anti-Methodist propaganda would affect any relationship they would have with Wesleyan Methodism. The Wesleyan Methodists gained notoriety of the worse sort not only for their insistence on an

evangelical message, but by setting up what seemed to many a separate ecclesiastical structure, or a renewed attempt to test out the idea of “occasional conformity” in competition with the establishment.¹⁶¹ It was this context of liability that not only separated the Wesley brothers from some of the Evangelical clergy specifically, but also in which continuing tensions that included theological, ecclesiological, and political issues which would become greater wedges between the regular and irregular elements of the Revival. By the latter third of the century, regular and irregular would essentially represent Evangelicals and Wesleyan Methodism respectively.

In the economic and social location that most Evangelicals found themselves in the middle part of the eighteenth century, they could not afford further stigma. The eighteenth century was a century rife with a desire for scandalous or libelous literature; the public was apparently addicted to it.¹⁶² The greatest difference between the Evangelicals and the Wesleyan Methodists in terms of their ability to absorb or defend, or even be labeled with such negative press, was economical. For a group of men determined to stay within the Establishment, and barely holding on in many cases to that preferred status, attachment to the zealotry of Methodism held little, if any, benefit.

¹⁶¹ One means by which the Wesleyan Methodists attempted to display their loyalty to the Church was by not holding Methodist meetings during “church hours.” They were not, however, the first group to initially place their own meeting times at a different time than Church meetings as a sign of partial conformity. Wallace notes that “Many Presbyterians avoided separate meetings during the Sunday morning services of the established church and thought of their private meetings as supplementing the spiritual diet of the Church of England” (Wallace, *Shapers of English Calvinism 1660-1714, Variety, Persistence, and Transformation* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2011], 23). See also John D. Ramsbottom, “Presbyterians and ‘Partial Conformity’ in the Restoration Church of England,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43 (April 1992), 249-70. The Church of England was keenly aware of early attempts at what was known as “occasional conformity” but, according to J. S. Simon, by 1712 even “occasional conformity” was not enough to hold public office. Non-conformists who had conformed by taking the Sacrament in the Church were expected to refrain from participation in non-conformist meetings while in office.” See J. S. Simon, “The Conventicle Act and Its Relation to the Early Methodists,” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 11 (1918), 92.

¹⁶² See Robert Shoemaker, *The London Mob: Violence and Disorder in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2004), especially Shoemaker’s chapter on print, pgs. 241-274.

From a purely economical and social perspective, attachment to Wesley's Methodism had no benefit whatsoever to an Anglican clergyman trying to remain within the bounds of the parish system and the Established Church. With Methodist society meetings held mostly on the outskirts of parishes and even by Wesley's death containing a fraction of Britain's population, the Methodists under Wesley's control could have easily received little notice from theologically sympathetic clergymen with responsibilities for the running and maintenance of an English parish.¹⁶³ In the eyes of many in the public, however, the difference between regular and irregular parties in the newly unfolding Revival was easily glossed over in the page-turning propaganda that spewed from presses across England.

This chapter will provide a description of the political and ecclesiastical environment in which Wesleyan Methodism faced such vehement opposition. The next will provide a closer detailed look at the practices which Wesley's Methodism employed to cause such a stir among admirers and detractors alike. Placed within the context of a highly-charged post-Restoration political environment, Wesley's practices regain their socially-disruptive mantle. This context—primarily a combination of factors most prevalent during the first part of the Revival—was made possible on the fertile soil of recent English political unrest. Opposition to Wesley's practices was fuelled publicly by anti-Methodist propaganda, the common fear of enthusiasm, and explicitly within the Church of England through the censure and ire of its episcopal leadership.

¹⁶³ It is even argued that the Evangelicals as a group were among the hardest working clerics in the country. The drive to promote the New Birth may have been a part of this work ethic, along with the desire to negate any suspicion they were under because of that very insistence on an evangelical conversion experience.

Methodism and Its Detractors

In terms of the venom which Methodism drew, it is all too easy to create a picture in which the opposition to Methodism simply represents that segment of English society that had not been touched by the Spirit that drove the Revival, or that had no understanding of the New Birth. In so doing, it is all too easy to create the picture of an unenlightened yet powerful established opposition to a Spirit-filled and simple people who faithfully followed the mandates of Scripture to live a holy life. To create this milieu, one must simply apply the arguments of many Reformation-era Protestants who attempted to make the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day into the Roman Catholics of their own, and in the process make Jesus a good Lutheran. Of course, such historiographical approaches are as easy and memorable as they are dangerous and wrong.

The complexity of the public opposition to Methodism is seen in its large volume and multiple sources. Criticism of "enthusiasm" was common throughout Great Britain from the episcopal desk to personal correspondence to the theatre stage. The critics were not the only ones producing sharply-worded public propaganda. The stage, for instance, fought back against Methodist claims that made the theatrical world seem an immediate short-cut to one of Dante's levels of hell.¹⁶⁴ In 1740, actors even gathered outside Charles Wesley's home threatening to burn

¹⁶⁴ Wesley referred to the theatre as "what Satan esteemed his own ground." See *Works* 20:485 (April 29, 1754), and also 20:3-4, 21:287, 365, and 23:312. Wesley was not alone in his criticism of the theatre as destructive of Christian virtue. See, for example, George Anderson, *A Reinforcement of the Reasons Proving that the Stage is an Unchristian Diversion* (Edinburgh and London: 1733).

it down. According to Charles, the Revival had cut off their livelihood. He wrote in his journal that “the ground of their quarrel with me is that the gospel has starved them.”¹⁶⁵

Many clergymen were equally defensive of Wesley’s sermon diatribes against what he saw as the “practical atheism” of much English Church life.¹⁶⁶ Methodism seemed to have an uncanny ability to undercut certain aspects of civic life through its pietistic message and through its expanding structure. As such, the Methodists, as Walsh wrote, were “whipping-boys for those who felt a compelling need to demonstrate in aggressive fashion their loyalty to traditional national values.”¹⁶⁷

Henry Rack provides five categories in which to place anti-Methodist propaganda. Although he claims that the distinctions are not precise, he outlined the five as: the charge of “enthusiasm,” specific theological criticism aimed at “Methodist teaching generally related to the process of salvation, breaches of church order, social disruption, and finally political subversion especially during times of public anxiety.”¹⁶⁸ Hempton notes that the “early Methodists were looked upon as ‘disturbers of the world,’ the new Levellers, and were thus victims of remarkably resilient Civil War memories.”¹⁶⁹ They also ignored numerous boundaries in their drive to preach the New

¹⁶⁵ See Charles Wesley, *Manuscript Journal*, 2:290 (Nov. 18, 1740).

¹⁶⁶ See especially, John Wesley’s Sermon 2, “The Almost Christian” in *Works*, 1. Wesley preached this sermon before a congregation in the University Church, St. Mary’s, Oxford, in 1741. The sermon was the last he was allowed to preach at St. Mary’s, afterward being taken out of the rotation of fellows preaching to the university.

¹⁶⁷ John Walsh, “Methodism and the Mob in the Eighteenth Century,” *Studies in Church History* 8 (1972), 227.

¹⁶⁸ Henry Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 275.

¹⁶⁹ David Hempton, *The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion*, c. 1750-1900 (London:

Birth with, as Hempton notes, itinerant, lay and female preachers who “crossed traditional boundaries of hierarchy, law, sex, age, wealth, education and religious vocation.”¹⁷⁰ Rack describes the charge of enthusiasm as the true “bugbear” that oftentimes included all other charges. Enthusiasm could be seen by contemporaries as that which propelled any number of seemingly irrational, and therefore irregular, behavior on the part of the overly zealous.

John Walsh specifically highlighted two aspects of Wesleyan Methodism which gave rise to alarm: “in an age when the agencies of government were decidedly weak and decentralised, Methodism looked the more sinister because of its highly articulated and nation-wide organisation.”¹⁷¹ This organization, although regarded by the Methodists as entirely benign, was seen to challenge the localized authority that did exist. Walsh argues, secondly, that this challenge to local authority was not only addressed “primarily to the poor,” but addressed to poor persons “whom it drilled into disciplined cadres which owed their allegiance to leaders far beyond the reach of any local authority.” This combination of decentralized national authority and local organization of the lower orders run by “itinerant agents, whose origins were unknown, whose persons were obscure, and who appeared to have no formal authorisation whatever” threatened to disrupt the authority of parson and squire and create a combustible combination.¹⁷²

Routledge, 1996), 149.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Walsh, “Methodism and the Mob,” 218.

¹⁷² Ibid.

Criticism was at times aimed at “Methodism” as a whole to include anyone of an evangelical bent.¹⁷³ At other times this opposition was aimed at specific leaders of the Revival.¹⁷⁴ In still others they meant simply to warn the public of the dangers of this newest set of sectarian religionists, a set that in the view of many were reminiscent of a sect of regicides who stripped England of its crown, faith, and glory in just the last century.¹⁷⁵ Bishop Gibson was keen to point out the similarities between these eighteenth-century Methodists and the sectarians turned regicides of the previous century.¹⁷⁶ Walsh notes that to many, “the Methodists looked alarmingly like the harbingers of a second and perhaps a more proletarian puritan revolution.”¹⁷⁷ An anonymous set of letters printed in the early 1760s simply laid the charge bare: “The schismatic leaders spoke then the same language, which the Methodist teachers now use.”¹⁷⁸

Critics with a High Church persuasion took aim at Methodism’s sectarian tendencies and its ability to seduce the weak away from the salvific world of sacrament, order, and apostolic

¹⁷³See for examples, Anonymous, *The Question Whether it Be Right to Turn Methodist Considered: In a Dialogue Between Two Members of the Church of England* (London: Printed for M. Cooper, 1745), Edmund Gibson, *Observations Upon the Conduct and Behaviour of a Certain Sect, Usually Distinguished by the Name of Methodists* (London: printed by Edward Owen, [1743 or 1744]), John Downes, *Methodism Examined and Exposed, or, The Clergy’s Duty of Guarding their Flocks Against False Teachers: A Discourse Lately Delivered in Four Parts* (London: Printed for John Rivington, 1759).

¹⁷⁴ John Parkhurst, *A Serious and Friendly Address to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley: In Relation to a Principal Doctrine Advanced and Maintained by Him and His Assistants* (London: Printed for J. Withers, 1753).

¹⁷⁵ George Swathe, *Enthusiasm No Novelty, or, The Spirit of the Methodists in the Year 1641 and 1642* (London: Printed for T. Cooper, 1739).

¹⁷⁶ See his *Observations Upon the Conduct and Behavior of a Certain Sect, Usually Distinguished by the Name of Methodists*.

¹⁷⁷ Walsh, “Methodism and the Mob,” 218.

¹⁷⁸ *An Address to the Right Honourable _____, with Several Letters to the _____ of _____, from the L_____ _____, In Vindication of her Conduct, on being charged with Methodism* (London: Printed for W. Sandby, in Fleet-Street, 1761), 6.

succession they felt dwelled in the defined parameters of the Church.¹⁷⁹ Latitudinarians took aim at what they saw as Methodism's excessive demands on its adherents and the incessant use of experience to justify its networks of societies. Even the distinctly orthodox within the Church of England, such as Archbishop Secker, felt that Methodism in its various forms had taken rightfully to the reform of the Church, but had become incapable of participating in the debate within the Church. As sectarians with a growing sense of a separate ethos and a self-designed structure that set them apart to function independently of the structures of the Church of England, they had relinquished their seat at the table.¹⁸⁰

In terms of the Methodists themselves, it is again too easy to assume that they were of one mind about the criticism they received. Charles Wesley wrote a piece against his own brother when in 1755 he felt that the United Societies were in danger of separating from the Church of England over the issue of Eucharistic administration.¹⁸¹ Charles would publish the piece again in 1784 when John ordained Richard Whatcoat, Thomas Vasey, and Thomas Coke for the work of the new Methodist church in the newly-independent American colonies. Wesley, as a "New Testament bishop" was seen by many, including many Methodists and Evangelicals, as nothing but a

¹⁷⁹ See, *The question, whether it be right to turn Methodist, considered. In a dialogue between two members of the Church of England*. (London: 1745), a document written for those the author thought might be tempted to "leave" the Church in order to join the Methodists. This view, seen as early as 1745, shows just how early fears of schism associated with Methodism ran through public discourse. It was not assumed that the Methodists were, in fact, reform-minded Anglicans, but rather a fringe, and thus dissenting, group attempting to undermine the unity of the Church of England.

¹⁸⁰ For a recent work on Archbishop Secker's view of church reform see Robert G. Ingram's *Religion, Reform and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century*. Ingram's work is particularly important to see the efforts of top-ranking ecclesiastical leaders to reform the Church of England in the eighteenth century. The picture of an aloof episcopate mired in the morass of political maneuvering is shattered by Ingram's fresh perspective.

¹⁸¹ Charles Wesley, *An Epistle to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley*.

schismatic in Anglican garb.¹⁸² The sharpest criticism he received for these ordinations came from his own brother. One of the earliest challenges to Wesley's claim to be a faithful priest of the Church came from Evangelical clergyman Thomas Adam.¹⁸³

What must be remembered within the context of this opposition is the underlying experience of the New Birth, or evangelical conversion that set these various Methodists and Evangelicals on fire in the first place. It was the experience of the New Birth that the Evangelical Revival was meant to produce in the hearts and lives of those who had yet to be "awakened" by the gospel. And while the idea of conversion was not foreign to English Christianity, the understanding of it was never uniform once the floodgates of Reformation ideology, Reformed, Lutheran, and even Counter-Reformation, had been opened wide by the court of Henry VIII. No Act of Uniformity ever produced the sort of theological uniformity that had culturally existed in the context of England's pre-Reformation Catholic heritage.¹⁸⁴ John Wesley may have argued adamantly in his 1777 sermon at the dedication of his City Road Chapel in London that Methodism was nothing but the honest expression of the Bible, the early Church, and the Church

¹⁸² See Charles's criticism and especially his poetry. It is also notable that in the most up-to-date listing of Anti-Methodist publications by Clive Field, that this item is not listed. Field's methodological approach to the list, like all before it, exclude inner-Methodist arguments published publicly that mirror those of non-Methodist detractors. In the case of Charles Wesley, his desire publicly to criticize his brother and the Conference speak loudly of his own self-perceived ecclesiastical identity and loyalty as a clergyman of the Church of England. Depending on one's historiographical perspective, the limits placed on anti-Methodist publication lists may or may not be helpful. The elusive nature of the term "Methodist" in the early part of the revival makes any listing of anti-Methodist materials an arduous task subject to subjectivity.

¹⁸³ Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 119.

¹⁸⁴ See for a description of this cultural context, see Eamon Duffy's *Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400 – c. 1500* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Duffy provides a detailed and valuable, albeit revisionist, description of the Catholic culture that dominated English life before the English Reformation.

of England, but not every Christian in England felt the same way that Wesley did.¹⁸⁵ To some, Wesley's Methodism looked nothing like the Anglicanism in which they had been born, lived their lives, and in which they hoped to die.

A Climate of Fear

The question of monarchical legitimacy within the *ancien regime* that was eighteenth-century Britain lay at the heart of the climate in which the bulk of anti-Methodist propaganda found root. The Jacobite rebellions in no way helped to bring cultural acceptance to Wesley's Methodism and his overreaction to the second rebellion in the 1740s simply added to underlying suspicions of his commitment to the stability of post-Restoration English life. Evangelical intervention was necessary to keep Wesley from appearing too eager to appear pro-Hanoverian within this suspicious climate; it took both Charles Wesley and Samuel Walker to convince Wesley that he did not need to publish a public letter on behalf of the Methodists in support of the Hanoverian dynasty.¹⁸⁶ This hesitancy to publish was a desire not to seem too eager to support the current regime such that it would make some question the authenticity of the letter's contents. It also attempted to avoid suggesting that Methodism was something distinct from the Church of England, and therefore in need of making such statements of loyalty.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Wesley's Sermon 112, "On Laying the Foundations," *Works* 3:585-586.

¹⁸⁶ See *Works*, 20:16, and *Works*, 26:104-6. For a fuller description of Wesley's reaction to the 1745 Rebellion see Theodore R. Weber, *Politics in the Order of Salvation: Transforming Wesleyan Political Ethics* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2001) and his chapter "Public Political Controversies I: John Wesley and the '45 Rebellion," 69-85.

¹⁸⁷ J. C. D. Clark writes that the very notion of "society" in the eighteenth century was a notion which described a particular connectedness (i.e. polite society). In terms of national concern the connectedness of the English

Wesley had written the public letter on behalf of the Methodists to show support for the king, but in a climate of fear or suspicion, these Evangelical leaders felt it undermined his authentically benign intentions. Fear of the promotion of partisanship, a hallmark of the century in English-speaking political discourse, was heightened during these Jacobite incursions. Charles and Walker thought the letter would be perceived by the public as sectarian in nature and thus antithetical to Methodist attempts to be seen as a religious movement and not a political one. The beginning of the letter itself reveals their concerns when Wesley writes:

So inconsiderable as we are, ‘a people scattered and peeled, and trodden under foot from the beginning hitherto’, we should in no wise have presumed, . . . to open our lips to your Majesty, had we not been induced, . . . by two considerations: the one, that in spite of all our remonstrances on that head we are continually represented as a peculiar sect of men, separating ourselves from the established Church; the other, that we are still traduced as inclined to popery.”¹⁸⁸

Although the sectarian label had merit as Wesley continued to promote the creation of a sub-system of religious societies within the structures of the Church, the second label that Methodism represented the promotion of popery was even more dangerous given the ecclesiastical allegiances of the Stuarts. Wesley continues with one of his first public pronouncements concerning the nature of Methodism and its relationship to the Church of England:

we think it incumbent upon us, if we must stand as a distinct body from our brethren, to tender for ourselves our most dutiful regards to your sacred Majesty, and to declare . . . that

people to their monarch, or state, was tantamount, the government itself being the fulcrum and unifier of what should be termed English “society.” In this light, Walker’s and Charles Wesley’s adamant insistence that Wesley not publish this tract of loyalty was an insistence that Wesley not set up Methodism as somehow detached as a group of good English people, members of society, rightfully and lawfully connected to their monarch and the state. See *English Society 1660-1832*, 3-4.

¹⁸⁸Wesley, March 5, 1744, in *Works* 20:16.

we are a part (however mean) of that Protestant Church established in these kingdoms . . . and are steadily attached to your Majesty's royal person and illustrious house.¹⁸⁹

Wesley adds to this his insistence that the Methodists “detest and abhor the fundamental doctrines of the Church of Rome” in order to make clear his disdain for this particularly libelous label against his movement.¹⁹⁰ The letter was never sent. It was, however, published in his *Journal* with the note that “upon farther consideration it was judged best to lay it aside.”¹⁹¹

In certain ways it could be said that John Wesley was simply a bad politician. Hempton argues, however, that “Wesley realized perfectly well that early Methodism teetered on the brink of legal irregularities, but he also had respect for English law and for ecclesiastical discipline.”¹⁹² This balancing act was not always readily seen in the heat of public debate. Like his parents, Wesley did not have the political flexibility of a Cranmer to make himself amenable to the ever-changing political context of post-Restoration England. His political and theological convictions were much more similar to Non-Jurors such as Thomas Ken. That Wesley was brought up in such an ideologically stubborn home, and was then surrounded by Jacobites during his education and his American missionary days, did not prepare him to function well as a political figure in a charged political environment, although obviously well-aware of the ramifications of English law. Hempton and Ward have both highlighted Wesley's political leanings, both equating Wesley with country

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ *Works* 20:17.

¹⁹² Hempton, *Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion*, 147.

Toryism.¹⁹³ Ward notes that Wesley was “born into a rabidly Tory circle” that saw little hope in foreigners, and critiqued British society and the government while “persuading themselves that the Restoration had led not merely to the reconstruction of the Church of England, but to a revival of morality.”¹⁹⁴ This political perspective, according to Ward, put Wesley at odds with the government of his day, especially that led by Robert Walpole, in fundamental ways. With the accession of George III in 1760, the Tories would begin to fair much better, but that Wesley was ever seen as acceptable by a larger portion of English society may well be due to his longevity more than any of his attempts to claim continuity with the Church. He also simply outlived the majority of his detractors.

Although Wesley’s political posturing would become more effective in the 1770s, his understanding of the political climate of the early Revival period was colored by his belief that theological issues, and not political ones, were at the forefront of the anti-Methodist challenge. In August of 1739, Wesley records a conversation in which he defends himself from the charge that he was out to undermine the Church:

For two hours I took up my cross in arguing with a zealous man, and labouring to convince him that I was not ‘an enemy to the Church of England’. He allowed, I ‘taught no other doctrines than those of the Church’, but could not forgive my teaching them *out of the church walls*. He allowed too (which none indeed can deny who has either any regard to truth or sense of shame) that ‘by this teaching many souls who till that time were perishing for lack of knowledge, have been, and are, brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.’ But say, these things ought not to be suffered.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Ibid., 80-81. Hempton argues that Wesley initially put his hope for renewal in the Prince of Wales, until his untimely death by tennis ball.

¹⁹⁴ Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 300.

¹⁹⁵ Wesley, August 27, 1739, *Works* 19:89. Baker identified the man in the journal account as “Th. Robins.”

Yet Wesley defends himself in the journal entry not against the charge that his practices were out of line with the cultural norms of his day, but against the charge that his theology is Roman Catholic. Arguing in the same entry that his understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith alone is enough to dispel any question of his loyalty to the Anglican mantle, he nonetheless seems oblivious to the practical reasons why his opponents refer to him and his movement with such titles. In a strange way, Wesley seems to assume that his critics' name-calling is grounded in an astute understanding of the finer details of dogmatic theology. The reader is left to wonder if he is either deflecting the accusations aimed at his irregular methods, or simply naive of the implications of his actions within such a charged environment.

Recent scholarship has emphasized the interrelationship of theological foundations and political ideology during the eighteenth century. Hempton writes that eighteenth-century attacks and defenses of the Established churches, for example, were based more on "theological and historical frameworks of understanding than on principles of utility or natural rights," adding that "the most intellectually influential ideas on the relationship between Church and State were not so much based on Locke and Warburton as on Hooker and Filmer."¹⁹⁶ Hempton is not arguing, however, that theological arguments were bereft of political and social import. Hooker's writings on ecclesiastical polity and Filmer's on the divine right of kings had obvious political

¹⁹⁶ David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

repercussions.¹⁹⁷ Wesley, especially during the first two decades of the Revival—the period in which most anti-Methodist propaganda was written—at least appeared oblivious to the connection between his own actions, and the actions of his fellow evangelicals, with the political uproar that they produced. Whether he actually was oblivious to these connections is hard to tell.

Evangelicalism as Cromwell Reborn

Some contemporary critics of the Evangelical Revival were not hesitant to throw politically-charged labels at the new movement that attempted to tie the evangelicals directly to the seventeenth-century parliamentarians who fought against the armies of Charles I. Much of the impetus behind these direct attacks had to do with the itinerancy of evangelical preachers. Wesleyan Methodism's attempts to create a category of partial-conformity under the Act of Toleration, which would guarantee Methodism the rights of dissenting groups without the second-class citizenship that came along with those rights, was also a source of much suspicion.

The Act of Toleration, passed by Parliament in 1689 to make provision within the English legal code for Trinitarian Protestant dissenters, made it possible for non-Anglicans to meet legally, but created a second-class of citizen based on religious practice. This provision was created out of the context which arose in the latter part of the seventeenth century, and attempts to buck this religious class system were seen by many to be the first signs of ferment against the government. In his 1744 *Observations Upon the Conduct and Behaviour of a Certain Sect, Usually Distinguished by the*

¹⁹⁷ See Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book I; and Robert Filmer, *The Anarchy of a Limited or Mixed Monarchy* (London[?]:1648), *The Necessity of the Absolute Power of Kings* (London[?]:1648), and *Patriarcha* (London[?]:1680).

Name of Methodists, Edmund Gibson, then Bishop of London, decried the act of holding unlicensed meetings. He wrote vehemently that

the unbounded Licentiousness of holding Assemblies for Divine Worship, both as to Persons and Places, which had prevailed for some Years before the Restoration, and of which our Histories are full; was a sufficient Warning to the Legislature, to have a watchful Eye over that Spirit, which had caused so much Confusion in the Kingdom; particularly in the publick Worship of God.¹⁹⁸

It was especially this last point, the “publick Worship of God,” that most caught the eye of those looking to watch for the return of what they saw as seventeenth-century extremism. The fact that Methodist meetings were held among the working classes and often on the outskirts of parish boundaries away from the mainstream of religious life did not help deflate the impressions of many who saw in them the recreation of seventeenth-century social and religious unrest. Also, as Walsh notes, tension resulted as “preachers, while professing themselves members of the Church of England, drew people away from the parish church and set up, if not as yet altar against altar, at least pulpit against pulpit, pastor against pastor, creating incipient schism in many parishes hitherto united as one flock.”¹⁹⁹ Comparisons between Wesley’s Methodism and earlier Puritan efforts were easily made.

Even Wesley’s evangelical conversion narrative with its language of a “heart strangely warmed” could be construed as politically subversive when placed alongside similarly worded statements by seventeenth century pro-parliamentarian clergymen. In an anonymous piece published in 1739 entitled *Enthusiasm No Novelty: Or, the Spirit of Methodists in the year 1641 and*

¹⁹⁸ Gibson, *Observations*, 3.

¹⁹⁹ Walsh, “Methodism and the Mob,” 219.

1642, the author intended to “present the reader with a specimen of that enthusiasm” which eventually “pour’d forth a deluge of misery and confusion over the whole kingdom” in the previous century and show how it was “equally visible in the extempore prayers and sermons of those times, as they are in the field-meetings of Kennington-common, &c. in these our days.”²⁰⁰

The author felt that there was no doubt that the social unrest of the past was beginning to show itself in the socially-destructive behavior of eighteenth-century evangelicalism.

In an obvious attempt to tie evangelical heart language—and perhaps John Wesley’s evangelical conversion account published the previous year—to historical social unrest the author of *Enthusiasm No Novelty* provided the following prayer of April 6, 1641:

Lord, I find now in my heart that inward warmth which I have found in prayer about four several times in a few years last past, which inward warmth of heart now is an undoubted courageous sign of the complete victory of thy saints, thy servants, in this civil war . . . I pray thee now set up thy standard against the king’s standard: do thou stand strongly, courageously in the hearts of our parliament, in the hearts of the citizens of London, in the hearts of the citizens of York, in the hearts of all thy faithful ones, and in the hearts of all those also whom thou hast inclined to favour, to side with, and to stand for the parliament and thy party.²⁰¹

Such an obvious correlation of heart language and anti-government sentiment would have never set well with the eighteenth-century desire for moderation and peace on the home front. Nor would it have made it easier for Evangelicals attempting to become incumbents. The fear that similarly-minded clergyman would again inhabit the Church’s pulpits, explains much of the venom reserved for regular and irregular evangelicals alike. Charles Wesley in 1738 was actually refused

²⁰⁰ Anonymous, *Enthusiasm No Novelty*, ii-iv.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

the pulpit by Charles Piers, a fellow Evangelical Anglican, whom Charles insisted was driven by “the fear of man.” Piers claimed that he was concerned for the “tenderness of his flock,” a concern that Charles’s strident journal account thought was of little value.²⁰² That this Evangelical on Evangelical rejection took place just two days after the Wesley brothers had been called to answer to the Bishop of London for irregular activities and preaching doctrines that had caused antinomianism “in the time of King Charles” should not be overlooked.²⁰³

The irony that Wesley presents to the historian is the amalgamation of a theological mind in line with the Catholic spirit of the Carolingian divines whose practices mirrored in many ways their Puritan and Parliamentary opponents. Add to the mix his allegiance to Tory politics and Wesley himself presents a confusing picture for admirer and detractor alike. That he would bring this amalgamation to the political context of eighteenth-century England makes the picture anything but simple. Wesley was one who personally attracted ardent admirers and detractors throughout his life. Association with Wesley or his movement had its risks regardless of one’s own social situation. Wesley’s own idiosyncrasies made connection with him problematic for Evangelicals whose message sounded much like his own, yet held to the established norms and parochial practices of the Church of England. The charged political climate simply provided the expectation that made evangelicals of any stripe look as though they were dangerous malefactors.

²⁰² Kimbrough and Newport, *Manuscript Journal*, 1:154.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 150-151.

Wesley and the Evangelicals Under Fire

The cannon fire of eighteenth-century propaganda and criticism aimed at Methodism affected the ministries of Evangelicals within the Church more broadly. At times, criticism targeted at the excesses of Methodism was aimed at specific clerics, such as William Romaine of London. Romaine may have been a lightning rod with or without the enthusiasm of the Revival, but the vitriolic attacks on his intelligence, fitness for the ministry, and sermons as seen in T. Mortimer's *Die and Be Damned: Or an Anecdote Against Every Species of Methodism; and Enthusiasm* are rife with the same tone and critical ire which were often aimed at Methodism as a whole.²⁰⁴ That Romaine, as a cleric of the Church of England, was called a Methodist at all was a means by which his suitability for clerical office was called into question. Not just his suitability, a common challenge to Wesley's desire to have his "helpers" ordained,²⁰⁵ but Romaine's allegiance to the Establishment was called into question by the use of that nomenclature. The term did little to aid any of the evangelicals in the early part of the century.

Ironically, Wesley complained in 1756 for being criticized for Romaine's actions. In a letter to the *Monthly Reviewers* Wesley wrote: "Gentlemen, - for a considerable time I have had a desire to trouble you with a few lines . . . The question I would propose is this: Is it prudent, is it just, is it

²⁰⁴ T. Mortimer, *Die and Be Damned: Or an Anecdote Against Every Species of Methodism; and Enthusiasm*, 2nd Edition (London: Printed for S. Hooper and A. Morley, at Gay's-Head near Beauforts-Buildings, in the Strand, 1758). Clive Field notes that Mortimer's piece was written originally in 1758, revised and enlarged the same year, and subsequently published in a third edition in 1761. There was also a Norwich edition of 1828.

²⁰⁵ See Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 209-211 for a discussion of Wesley's attempts and interest in episcopal ordination for his lay preachers.

humane, to jumble whole bodies of people together and condemn them by the lump?”²⁰⁶

Apparently, the editors of the magazine had been aggravated by Romaine. Their response to Romaine’s provocation simply highlights the connectedness of the Revival, and at least in the public eye the generic use of the term “Methodist.” Wesley responded: “I am not Mr. Romaine; neither am I accountable for his behaviour. And what equity is this? one man has offended you: therefore you fall on another. Will it excuse you to say, ‘But he is called the same name’? especially when neither is this his own name, but a term of derision.”²⁰⁷

Fletcher records in a 1759 letter to Charles Wesley the reaction of the Hill family not only to his own conversion, but to the probability of further conversions among their family because of his influence. Richard Hill had converted to evangelicalism, and it was feared among family members that Fletcher’s continuing association with them might “corrupt” others such that “all the family will be ruined by this Plague of Methodists.”²⁰⁸ Fletcher, who had been a favorite of the matriarch of the family and tutor for her children, following his conversion to Methodism, was seen as a sort of pariah. Madame Hill informed Fletcher that he could “starve to death without her being troubled” and that he would never be given the living at Madeley. History shows that he was

²⁰⁶ John Wesley, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M. Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford*, Standard Edition, Vol. 3, ed. John Telford (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 196, (John Wesley to the Monthly Reviewers, Sept. 9, 1756). Subsequent volumes signified by *Letters* (Telford).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 198-199.

²⁰⁸ See John Fletcher’s letter to Charles Wesley, 22 March 1759, in Peter Forsaith, ed., *Unexampled Labours*, 61-62.

in fact given the living at Madeley; but this sort of personal venom was not particular to John Fletcher.²⁰⁹

Association with Methodism in this period posed a risk to anyone with a position of power. In a set of anonymous letters written in the early 1760s and mentioned previously in this chapter, the author is writing to members of the establishment who he/she is afraid will lose their clout if their name is associated with the enthusiasm of Methodism. It is obvious from the letters that both the author and the addressee had a sympathetic view of evangelicalism within the Church of England and they believed that reform of the Church was necessary for the propagation of the Gospel.

The author was certain that the Methodists were not a malevolent force and that they, in fact, “do good,” but also certain that they do so in “such a way as tends to great hurt, as is likely to introduce a terrible disorder and confusion.”²¹⁰ This concern that the Methodists were undermining their efforts by means of their practices would be explained to Wesley by Evangelicals such as Thomas Adam and Samuel Walker early in the Revival, and would later become the Evangelical party-line under leaders such as Charles Simeon. The author, however, was not simply content to argue that Methodist practices subverted its productive aspects, but that association with Methodism itself was a detriment that would ultimately undermine the effectiveness of anyone associated with it.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Mortimer, *Die and Be Damned*, 2.

Speaking to a person of rank, even with the title “the Right Honourable,” the author claims that Methodist practices were not only similar to the practices of seventeenth-century enthusiasts but that “the tenacity which the Methodists’ practice has to revive all these mad and mischievous proceedings, and the countenance it has given to the revival of them in many parts of the kingdom, create a very strong prejudice against their advocates; should you be considered as one of these, your weight will be entirely lost.”²¹¹ While the author’s words of warning border closely on what sounds like threats, his/her underlying concern for the productive influence of the recipient is made plain in pleading words:

If by particular civilities shewn to any Methodist teachers you are thought to favour their proceedings, I beg that you would be pleased to reflect, how much your power to serve the interest of true religion will be hereby weakened.²¹²

The interests of true religion, even that kind that would bring about needed reform in the Church of England would be, according the author, severely hindered by any connection to the socially disruptive behavior of this latest sect of enthusiasts.

At the same time, the historian should not assume that the evangelicals were simply on the receiving end of such biased criticism. The Wesleys and Whitefield, for example, often brought upon themselves the attention and venom of their ecclesiastical colleagues and superiors. As seen in his university sermons of the late 1730s and early 1740s, Wesley’s approach to “awaken” the clergy of the Church that he personally felt called to reform was primarily, to write scathing pieces against them corporately and to set up unlicensed meetings under his direct control within their

²¹¹ Ibid., 7.

²¹² Ibid., 6-7.

individual parishes. The latter action would bring him into direct conflict with Evangelicals, including his brother, Charles as well as Edward Stillingfleet and Henry Venn.²¹³

The Revival and Episcopal Power

Bishop Edmund Gibson is perhaps a unique figure in which to see the affects of episcopal incursion into the arena of anti-Methodist publications and the affects such efforts made on the Wesleyans and Evangelicals. Gibson was a noted churchman, having played a significant role in the ecclesiastical discussions that arose during the reigns of William and Anne relative to the rights and privileges of Convocation. His two volume 1713 folio, the *Codex juris ecclesiastici Anglicani*, marked him as one of the most astute students of English canon law. Even on his gravestone his concern for church order is highlighted. Etched in stone upon his funerary monument is praise for “His Lordship’s peculiar Care and Concern for the Constitution and Discipline of the CHURCH of ENGLAND” as “eminently distinguished” by “his Invaluable Collection of HER LAWS” and “by his prudent and Steady Opposition to every Attack made upon Them.”²¹⁴

While they held similar views of the Methodists as wayward Anglicans if not outright dissenters, Gibson and Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury, took different routes in which to combat what they saw as the excesses of evangelicalism. Secker all but ignored the Revival and spent his ecclesiastical career working for the reform of the Church from within and through

²¹³ *Letters (Telford)* 4:60-61.

²¹⁴ Gibson’s funerary monument is located at All Saints, Fullham, London.

official channels.²¹⁵ Gibson took a more direct role in anti-Methodist propaganda, and in the exertion of ecclesiastical power to curb Methodist endeavors. In his own London diocese and in Bristol—thus encompassing the original field of Wesley’s then newly-formed United Societies by 1739—ecclesiastical censure was swift from the very beginning and hindered the cooperation of the regular Evangelical clergy with irregulars like the Wesleys and Whitefield.

The radical nature of Wesley’s and Whitefield’s field preaching and its disregard for parish boundaries brought about rapid action from a Church still suspect of irregularity, especially field preaching. Wesley’s continued building of a Methodist substructure within the Church did not stop with field preaching, as he began to send out laymen to do the same. Methodist hagiography has attempted to make Wesley’s actions look nothing but heroic, but in doing so it has undermined the radical nature of what Wesley was actually doing. These specific practices will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, but for the purposes of episcopal censure Frank Baker notes the “refusal to acknowledge territorial restrictions, whether of parish or of diocese, was allied to a somewhat cavalier attitude to the governing authority of the bishop.”²¹⁶ It is not entirely clear, but likely that this somewhat cavalier attitude was thought by some on the episcopal bench to be the stirrings of presbyterianism.

The bishops began to answer these challenges to their authority in various ways. One such measure was the Islington Precedent (Ruling) which stated that no one could preach in a church

²¹⁵ See Ingram, *Religion, Reform and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century*, 2007.

²¹⁶ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 63.

or churchyard without written permission from the Bishop. It was applied in London and subsequently in Bristol. Because of the ruling we may never know how many clergy supported Wesleyan Methodism in the earliest stages of the Revival.

Wesley's journal entry for March 3, 1742 describes the affect on Methodist preaching and the relationship with Evangelical clergy that these episcopal rulings produced:

I explained in the evening at Fonmon, though in weakness and pain, how 'Jesus saveth us from our sins.' The next morning at eight I preached at Bonvilston, a little town four miles from Fonmon. Thence I rode to Llantrisant and sent to the minister to desire the use of his church. His answer was, he should have been very willing; but the bishop had forbidden him. By what law? I am not legally convict, either of heresy or any other crime. By what authority then am I suspended from preaching? By barefaced arbitrary power.²¹⁷

From the same journal entry the reader is given the impression that these episcopal censures were not universally mandated. Wesley notes that "Another clergyman immediately offered me his church. But it being too far off I preached in a large room, spent a little time with the society in prayer and exhortation, and then took horse for Cardiff."²¹⁸

A similar situation happened to Charles Wesley on November 17, 1740. He wrote in his journal that "again my mouth was opened to preach the law and the Gospel at Llantrisant. Mr. Harris, the minister, was exceedingly civil. He had been dealt with to refuse me the pulpit, but

²¹⁷John Wesley, March 3, 1742, *Works*, 19:255-256. Wesley notes similar instances of episcopal censure in Dublin in 1747. He wrote in his journal for the 10th of August of that year: "Between eight and nine I went to Mr. R[oque] (the curate of St. Mary's) he professed abundance of goodwill, commended my sermon in strong terms, and begged he might see me again the next morning. But at the same time he expressed the most rooted prejudice against lay preachers or preaching out of a church, and said the Archbishop of Dublin [Charles Cobbe (1687-1765)] was resolved to suffer no such irregularities in his diocese." John Wesley, 20:187-188.

²¹⁸John Wesley, March 3, 1742, *Works*, 19:256.

would not break his word.”²¹⁹ Ward notes that Richard Harris was vicar of Llantrisant at the time, and that the bishop, John Gilbert (1693–1761), who served the diocese of Llandaff (1740–48), would later become Archbishop of York, and left a reputation for haughtiness. It was Gilbert who later refused to ordain the Evangelical John Newton.²²⁰

During the early to middle part of the 1740s numerous bishops across the country responded in writing to the “new Methodists.” These included Archbishop of York, Dr. Thomas Herring who wrote a letter to his clergy warning about Methodism, and Gibson’s work already mentioned which dealt specifically with legal issues. Gibson seemed, according to Baker, “genuinely shocked that such men could pretend to be loyal churchmen.”²²¹

To Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, Dr. Richard Smalbroke’s *Charge*, Wesley responded in his *Father Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion* in December of 1744. Baker notes that in refuting Smalbroke, “a bishop who attacked his beloved movement, Wesley was restrained neither by fear of retribution nor hope of favour, nor even by undue reverence for a dignitary thirty years his senior.”²²² Smalbroke called Wesley an enthusiast, a very serious charge, to which Wesley responded that Smalbroke had a truncated pneumatology. One of the most strongly worded

²¹⁹Charles Wesley, *The Journal of Charles Wesley*, Vol. 1, March 9, 1736 to December 28, 1747 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 258.

²²⁰John Wesley, March 3, 1742, *Works*, 19:255n.

²²¹Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 91.

²²²*Ibid.*, 93-94.

episcopal challenges came from Gibson in his “Charge” to the clergy of his diocese written in 1749. In it he states:

There is another species of enemies, who give shameful disturbance to the parochial Clergy, and use very unwarrantable methods to prejudice their people against them, and to seduce their flocks from them; the Methodists and Moravians, who agree in annoying the established ministry, and in drawing over to themselves the lowest and most ignorant of the people, by pretences to greater sanctity.²²³

What the Lord Bishop describes are the perceived shared practices of Wesley, Whitefield, and the Moravians. Whether or not they were seen together like this by the majority of the public is uncertain, but the Bishop’s placing them together in this way is an indication that by 1749 such a grouping was acceptable. This grouping suggests that the breach between Wesley and the Moravians was not yet apparent or of interest to critics. What is indicated by this attempt to discuss these three wings of the Revival interchangeably is the fluid nature of the term “Methodist.”

A large portion of Wesley’s response to Gibson is his denial that he actually held the doctrines that Gibson charged him with holding as a member of this amalgamated group. The Bishop further noted that “Endeavours [on the part of the ecclesiastical hierarchy against the Methodists] have not been wanting.” He added that “these endeavors have caused some abatement in the pomp and grandeur with which these people for some time acted, yet they do not seem to have made any impression upon their leaders.”²²⁴

²²³Edmund Gibson, *The Charge of the Right Reverend Father in God, Edmund Lord Bishop of London. At the Visitation of his Diocese in the years 1746 and 1747*, p. 4.

Gibson, although a fierce opponent of the Revival and its unorthodox use of canon law, had an enduring respect for the Methodists and their ability not to evade criminal charges. He was also keen to use these dangerous Methodists as a reason to encourage the regular clergy to more active service to the Church. In some ways, one of his earlier charges to the clergy of London in 1742 can be seen as embracing the idea of a competitive religious marketplace much like Adam Smith would later expand upon in his *Wealth of Nations*. Gibson was simply applying the idea of a competitive religious marketplace to the London religious scene, placing Methodism and other forms of dissent as movements which should fire up the Church, and particularly its clergy, in the face of competition. In the letter, Gibson writes to his clergy colleagues:

I need not tell you, what gross representations have been made both here and in the plantations, as if the generality of the clergy of the Church of England were shamefully remiss and negligent in the Pastoral Office. This slander upon our Church and clergy has been publicly spread and avow'd in a very unworthy and licentious manner; and has received a reprehension, though more gentle than it deserved, in a late pastoral letter against the enthusiasm of these days. But however, the reproaches of those men may be so far of use to us, as to be made a fresh incitement to care and diligence in the offices belonging to our function; that, after the example of St. Paul in a like case, we may cut off all occasion of slander, from them who desire occasion.²²⁵

Overall, this 1742 letter was an attempt to call the clergy to the highest standards of clerical excellence. The letter was also a defense against what Gibson saw as rising opposition to the Church of England from diverse sources including not only evangelical itinerants reminiscent of “one hundred years ago,” but also those in parliament who were calling for church reform. The recently defeated Quaker Bill, an attempt to alter the way in which church tithes were assessed, was

²²⁴Ibid., 6.

²²⁵ Gibson, *Letter to the Clergy* (1742), 8-9.

seen by Gibson as a direct attack on the Church.²²⁶ Gibson's purpose was to encourage what he saw as the best-found means of caring for the souls of his parishioners through the offices and liturgy of the Established Church.

Official persecution by Church or State authorities such as that which religious minorities had experienced for centuries was never experienced by English evangelicals in the eighteenth-century. Jeremy Gregory has written that this has as much to do with anti-Catholic sentiment which remained strong in England during the period. Gregory notes that "Persecution of dissent was contrasted as a hallmark of popery. Although evidence can be found of mobs stoning and harrying dissenters (including early Methodists), and pulling down their meeting houses, clergy were expected to work within a framework where they persuaded rather than persecuted nonconformists."²²⁷ Impressions were being made, however, on the general population who devoured anti-Methodist propaganda and on the Evangelical clergy. It was the Evangelical clergy who were most affected by episcopal censure. Only Evangelical clergy, or clergy with inclinations toward evangelicalism, were likely to have allowed the Wesleys and Whitefield to preach in their pulpits to begin with. Thus the censures from the bishops should be seen as censure of Methodism, and warning to regular Evangelical clergy and to the general population.

The censures of the bishops should be seen as key to understanding the ecclesiastical pressure that ultimately made disassociation from Wesley and all forms of Methodism essential to

²²⁶ See Norman Sykes, *Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London 1669-1748* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1926), 148-175, and S. Taylor, "Sir Robert Walpole, the Church of England and the Quaker Tithe Bill of 1736" *Historical Journal* 28 (1985), 51-77.

²²⁷ Jeremy Gregory, "The Long Eighteenth Century" in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers, eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 36.

the regular Evangelical ministry within the prescribed structures of the Church of England. The same desire to group together the Wesleys, Whitefield, and the Moravians in Bishop Gibson's *Charge* could have made Evangelical clergy wary of the ease in which guilt by association could have affected their ecclesiastical livelihood. The censures, however, were part and parcel of a theologically-charged political environment which created a context in which irregularity was all too easily connected to the practices and politics of earlier enthusiasts and parliamentarians of the previous century.

Pressing Issues

The challenge before the historian looking at the criticism of eighteenth-century evangelicalism is to see how the Revival and its various off-shoots, although primarily thought of historically as a theological or religious movement, were seen in their own day as a political challenge. They were thought to be testing much more than the theological understanding of conversion. Although much ink was used to argue for and against instantaneous or progressive paradigms of conversion, the theological debate was but an opening act to the larger challenge. The Revival was seen to mount an offense against the ecclesiastical, political, and social fabric of a nation not only with a long historical memory, but one in which the Church and the State were intrinsically connected such that a challenge to the Church could easily be seen as challenge to the State and thus to the Crown itself. Given the Jacobite rebellions of both 1715 and 1745, not only was the alarm caused by Methodist sectarianism understandable, but the historical memory of the English people revived to re-live the English Civil War by the appearance of armed soldiers

marching into England from Scotland waving the Stuart banner. The political environment of the eighteenth century and its connectedness to the seventeenth created a context in which evangelicals passionately preaching the New Birth, met opposition equally passionate to challenge them in order to maintain the delicate social fabric of post-Restoration society.

Gregory described this interrelated social context reiterating the work of J.C.D. Clark when he wrote that “Many Churchmen believed that the interests of Church and State were in fact inseparable and interdependent, and that enemies of the Church were also enemies of the State.”²²⁸ Hempton, writing on the Church of England and its role within the political context of eighteenth-century England, observed that “Far from being regarded as a protected subsidiary of the State, the Church of England was an integral and indispensable part of the theory and practice of governing.”²²⁹ This interrelated social context was the context in which Methodists, regardless of their specific sectarian associations within the world of the Revival be they Wesleyan or Whitefieldite or anything else, faced together the challenges and fears of those who saw the Revival as a threat to English cultural norms.

²²⁸ Gregory, “The Long Eighteenth Century,” 19.

²²⁹ Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland*, 3.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE POLITICS OF MAVERICK POLITY

Lord, we beseech thee to keep thy household the Church in continual godliness; that through thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve thee in good works, to the glory of thy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The twenty-second Sunday after Trinity

If T. Mortimer's choice of title, *Die and Be Damned*, was not enough to convey his animus toward the rising Methodist societies, the advertisement within his piece made it clear that he intended "to promote an extensive knowledge of the real principles and practices of the Methodists" not to understand better the growing movement but "in order to put some stop to the prevailing errors of this growing sect."²³⁰ These "religious politicians," as Mortimer called them, were a danger to the welfare of the English people, and on the ground, in the fields, on the street corner, these Methodists were setting up a competing structure in plain view of the Establishment and its Church.

John Wesley's intentions when setting up the United Societies were obviously different than Mortimer's interpretation of the situation. Mortimer, however, was not the only person to come to the conclusion that Wesley's efforts to create a structure of Methodist societies were more than the establishment of a new form of Anglican revivalism—to these critics, Wesley's structure was the creation of an ecclesiastical substructure that would challenge the hegemonic standing of

²³⁰ T. Mortimer, *Die and Be Damned*, Advertisement.

the Church of England.²³¹ As such, this substructure could have been seen as much as a political statement, a challenge to the Church, as it was a desire for renewal within the Church. J. R. H. Moorman in his history of the English Church quotes Overton and Relton who stated that “It is purely a modern notion that the Wesleyan movement ever was, or ever was intended to be, except by Wesley, a Church movement.”²³² While the idea that Anglican Methodism, or Church Methodism, is a modern notion can easily be challenged, the idea that Methodism was a challenge to the Church prone to dissent was widely held from the moment it began. Edmund Gibson in his *Observations on a Certain Sect* was convinced that Methodism in all its forms was a distinct challenge to the laws of England and a challenge to the Establishment. The Methodists, according to Gibson’s understanding of their actions, were in defiance of the Act of Toleration and the Conventicle Act and thus in blatant disobedience of the government and of the political settlement of Post-Restoration England. Gibson’s *Observations* describe the political fallout of Wesley’s maverick use of Anglican polity.

Gibson was keen to observe the expanding challenge posed to the Establishment as Methodism in all of its various forms began to promote and engage in ecclesiastical irregularity. These Methodists “began with Evening-Meetings at private Houses” and have “for some Time, to

²³¹ See Clive D. Field, *Anti-Methodist Publications of the Eighteenth Century: A Revised Bibliography* (Manchester: John Rylands Library, 1991).

²³² J. H. Overton and F. Relton, *The English Church from the Accession of George I to the end of the Eighteenth Century*, 75, as quoted in J. R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England*, 3rd ed., (London: A & C Black, 1953, 1980), 307.

open and appoint *publick Places* of Religious Worship, with the same Freedom, as if they were warranted by the Act of *Toleration*.”²³³

And, not content with that, they have had the Boldness to preach in the *Fields* and other open Places, and by publick Advertisements to invite the *Rabble* to be their Hearers; notwithstanding an express Declaration in a Statute (22 Car. II. c. I.) against assembling in a FIELD, by Name. And how big with Mischief that Practice in particular is, may be abundantly seen in the past and present Accounts of it . . . and may be sensibly felt in our own, when it will be too late to remedy it, if not attended-to *in Time*.²³⁴

Gibson’s observations, similar to those of the clergyman Charles Wesley heard in Newcastle who railed against the Methodists as “enemies to the Church, seducers, troublers, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, etc”²³⁵ were principally concerned with two practices of irregular evangelicalism; societies and field preaching. The gathering of non-clergy led societies²³⁶ and the unauthorized gatherings held in fields and town squares touched a nerve in post-Restoration England that went far beyond theological dispute. This chapter will look specifically at the impact of societies. Particular attention will be given to Wesley’s creation of the Wesleyan Methodist societies under his oversight, the use of societies by so-called regular Evangelicals, and the reaction both

²³³ Gibson, *Observations*, 4.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Charles Wesley, *Manuscript Journal*, July 17, 1743, 1:358.

²³⁶ I use the term “non-clergy” rather than “lay” to highlight the fact Wesley’s societies were not run by religious leaders of any kind, but distinctly, regardless of issues of apostolic succession and valid ordination, by religious lay persons who did not fit into the categories of ecclesiastical leadership in eighteenth-century England. The radical nature of Wesley’s experiment can be lost on the modern pluralist mind. The Evangelical societies were overwhelmingly led by clergyman of the Church. This is a radical distinction between the two groups. Within dissenting congregations, it must be remembered that religious leaders within their structures were ordained by their respective groups. Wesleyan ordination was not an issue in the 1740s when the Revival began in fullswing.

Evangelical and non-Evangelical within the Church to Wesley's burgeoning ecclesiastical subculture.

David Hempton has written that "in truth, Wesley's support of the Church of England was always more impressive in thought than in deed, and was neither static nor entirely unconditional."²³⁷ Wesley's approach, seen by Methodists then and now as pragmatic and by others as schismatic, was not as radical as his opponents made it out to be in much anti-Methodist propaganda. His approach was fueled by a desire to create a communal context within which his soteriological vision could be carried out.²³⁸ Yet it was the creation of this soteriological laboratory and competing liturgical context that raised the ire of Wesley's opponents and many of the Evangelicals.

Wesley's structure of society, class, and band within the overarching confines of the Church is well known.²³⁹ Its evolution was gradual and arose from precedents already seen in English church history and even at the time that had been used by others in various forms.²⁴⁰ Walsh has aptly noted that "Wesley's genius came out less in originality than in the ability to snap up useful ideas and adapt them swiftly to his own purpose."²⁴¹ Unfortunately for Wesley and

²³⁷ David Hempton, "Wesley in Context," 63.

²³⁸ Henry Knight III goes so far as to state that Wesley's theological vision cannot be understood apart from the context of the Methodist bands, classes, and societies within the Church of England. See his *The Presence of God in the Christian Life: John Wesley and the Means of Grace*. Pietist and Wesleyan Studies, No. 3. (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 1992).

²³⁹ See David Lowes Watson's *The Early Methodist Class Meeting* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985).

²⁴⁰ See Ibid. 67-92, also Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 117-119, for the practical nature of the rise of the societies, classes, and bands of Wesley's Methodism.

certain Evangelicals who founded similar societies within their own parishes, some of this borrowing of “useful ideas” created suspicion in the post-Restoration era because of the history of rebellion attached to these appropriated practices.

The extent to which Wesley founded and or swallowed up these small revivalistic groups continued throughout the period to complicate his relationship with Evangelical clergymen.²⁴² No attempt on the part of Evangelicals within the Church created anything near as complicated a schema as Wesley’s United Societies, and some of Wesley’s societies were found in Evangelical parishes which subsequently caused friction between the parties.²⁴³ This and the trouble caused between Evangelicals and Wesley’s army of lay preachers will be the topic of the next chapter.

What Wesley did not seem to foresee with the creation of a Methodist structure within the Church was the extent to which his societies would gain their own ethos separate from the Church of his birth. Charles Wesley was always quick to remind his brother of the importance of maintaining distinct connections to the Church of England and remain “only a sound part of that Church.”²⁴⁴ Charles was aware of even the power of words to the formation of a Methodist ethos

²⁴¹ Walsh, “John Wesley 1703-1971,” 6.

²⁴² See Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 177.

²⁴³ Among Evangelicals, it was as common to start clerical clubs, such as those started by Fletcher and Walker, as it was to start small groups for laypersons. This emphasis on clerical clubs should be seen as a distinct difference between Wesleyans and Evangelicals, as the emphasis on clergy among the Evangelicals indicated a stronger commitment to the regular ministry of the Church of England.

²⁴⁴ Charles Wesley, *Manuscript Journal*, March 6, 1744, 1:392.

and reminded his brother as early as 1744 to “guard against this; and in the name of the Lord, address tomorrow!”²⁴⁵

Wesley may have been raised up and trained within the confines of the Church and his faith given voice within the rituals of the Prayer Book, but his followers would soon be formed within a dissenting system that had been created by an Anglican. Walsh writes that Wesley “saw his societies as an evangelical order within a Church whose surrounding environment of catholicity—apostolic order, liturgy, sacramental life—he took largely for granted and assumed to be readily available.”²⁴⁶ Wesley’s assumption that his society members would participate within this catholicity did not prove realistic. The independent ethos of Methodism grew to become a stronger influence on the Methodist people than their founder’s pronounced attachment to the Church.²⁴⁷ Detached from the English Church’s liturgical and social context, the ultimate separation of Wesleyan Methodism from its Anglican foundation was inevitable. Wesley’s societies and the ever-increasing ethos of Methodist separatism within which they existed gave birth to a context of liturgical detachment.

In a certain sense, Wesley assumed that the liturgical culture created by the parish structure of the Church of England was more durable than it was. His assumption was that the people under his care would retain a love for the Church that mimicked his own, although in fact they

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Walsh, “John Wesley 1703-1791,” 13.

²⁴⁷ In fact, Ward writes that as “Wesley became embroiled with the hierarchy on matters doctrinal and practical” that “a certain desperation began to colour his pledges of loyalty.” See Ward, “The Legacy of John Wesley: The Pastoral Office in Britain and America” in his *Faith and Faction* (London: Epworth Press, 1993), 227.

would ultimately find meaning in his irregular practices. Wesley also underestimated the extent to which close-knit parishes would react to the incursion of Methodist preachers. The geographical landscape of early Wesleyan Methodism reveals the inability of Methodism to infiltrate the dense parish structures of southeast England. Ward notes that the movement Philip Spener started in Central Europe, much like the movement Wesley started later on English soil, was not ultimately wedded to the ecclesiastical structures he had wished to reform and thus became distinct from them.²⁴⁸ The opposition Wesley received from Evangelical clergymen for supplanting the life of their parishes and disregarding parish boundaries becomes integral to understanding the separation of Wesleyan Methodism and Evangelical Anglicanism within this context of liturgical and social detachment.

What the Evangelicals foresaw in their arguments with Wesley over the societies was the long-term effects of separation from the Church. Evangelical Thomas Adam wrote to Wesley during the turmoil of 1755 over the possibility of Methodist separation discussed at the Wesleyan conference. Adam's larger concern was the sending of lay preachers and the founding of societies. He was already convinced that the irregularities of Wesleyan Methodism represented a form of separation from the Church but implored Wesley to pull back from these practices in order to retain an evangelical presence within the Church. He wrote:

Upon the whole, therefore, it is humbly submitted to your most serious consideration, whether the separation is not wide enough already, particularly in the instance of unordained persons preaching and gathering societies to themselves wherever they can; and whether all Methodists might not serve the interests of Christ better as witnesses and examples of a living faith, and expect a greater blessing from the God of order upon their

²⁴⁸ Ward, *Christianity Under the Ancien Regime 1648-1789*, 105.

talents, gifts, and graces, whatever they are, by returning to a closer union with the Church, and repairing the breach they have made, than by making it still wider, and separating what they think the gospel-leaven from the lump.²⁴⁹

Wesley's desire to save souls without delay often clashed with the long-term project of creating an Evangelical presence within the Church of England. Newton, never an explicit opponent of dissent, but still a proponent of the Church and of an evangelical presence within it, warned an eager young evangelical interested in holy orders in 1765 to refrain from the appearance of irregularities if he wanted to find a place within the Church.²⁵⁰ Practices such as extemporaneous prayer, lay preaching, and societies under lay control were seen as a rejection of the Establishment. And these practices were considered fundamental by Wesley in his attempt to revive that very Establishment.²⁵¹ Wesley had little patience for canons which appeared to hinder the work of evangelism, nor did he share the firm conviction of others that these irregular practices signified a separation.

An example of Wesley's ecclesiastical impatience was the creation of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the newly-formed United States just months before the consecration of Bishop Seabury by Scottish Episcopal bishops and the creation of a truly Anglican American church.²⁵² Wesley appears to have been more concerned with the short-term effects of his decisions

²⁴⁹ *Works*, 26:604 (From the Revd. Thomas Adam, Oct. 10, 1755).

²⁵⁰ John Newton, *Cardiphonia: Or, the Utterance of the Heart; in the Course of A Real Correspondence in Two Volumes* (London: 1798), 2:51. Newton encouraged the young evangelical to "keep your zeal within moderate bounds."

²⁵¹ See *Works*, 26:595 (To the Revd Samuel Walker, September 24, 1755).

²⁵² Prichard argues in his work on the history of the Episcopal Church that the Wesleys had to be aware of

on the lives of those to whom he felt called to preach the Gospel. He was little interested in the creation of a long-term “party” within the Church of England—a fundamental distinction between the Wesleyans and the Evangelicals.

For Wesley, separation from the Church was a negation of Church canons. There is ample reason to assume his position given the way in which Subscription and Eucharistic participation signaled for many an acceptance of the Church’s authority. Wesley never encouraged his followers to subscribe to anything contrary to the Thirty-Nine Articles or the Homilies, and in fact was adamant that all his preachers must have an “invariable attachment to the Church.”²⁵³ He continuously encouraged his followers to partake of the Sacrament whenever it was available.²⁵⁴ In a letter to Samuel Walker, Wesley wrote that “at present I apprehend those, and those only, to separate from the Church who either renounce her fundamental doctrines, or refuse to join in her public worship,” and he argues further that “as yet we have done neither, nor have we taken one step further than we were convinced was our bounden duty.”²⁵⁵ This “bounden duty” he at other times refers to as conscience. In another letter, “To a Clerical Friend,” Wesley asks “Do you desire

the efforts by American Anglicans to attain episcopal oversight over the newly-independent states. The efforts of Seabury and his New England colleagues, as well as those by William White and his colleagues from Maryland to attain episcopal ordination at the hands of English bishops were well known in England at the time. See Prichard, *A History of the Episcopal Church*, Revised Edition, 1999.

²⁵³ *Works*, 26: 470 (Letter to the Revd. Charles Wesley, July 17, 1751). Curiously, another letter to Charles Wesley, see *Works* 26:471, written by John three days later uses the phrase, “The Church, that is the Societies, both *must* and *shall* maintain the preachers *we send* among them,” indicating at least in that particular letter that Wesley equated “Church” and “the Societies.” In the summer of 1751, Charles Wesley was on a tour of the northern societies examining the Methodist lay preachers. John’s language is an oddity at this point.

²⁵⁴ See “The Duty of Constant Communion” in John Wesley, *Sermons* III (71-114), Volume 3 in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980).

²⁵⁵ *Works*, 26:595 (Letter to the Revd. Samuel Walker, Sept. 24, 1755).

us . . . to desist from advising those who now meet together . . . or in other words, to dissolve our societies?” to which he responds, “We cannot do this with a safe conscience; for we apprehend many souls would be lost thereby, and that God would require their blood at our hands.”²⁵⁶

Representing the mature Evangelicalism that would mark the latter part of the eighteenth century into the nineteenth, Henry Venn, a friend of the Wesleys, wrote to his son in 1792 a letter entitled “The Mistakes into Which Young Ministers are Apt to Fall.” In the letter he outlined many of the mistakes that he had made as a young clergyman. He maintained that among the primary mistakes he had made in ministry:

I neglected to be large and full in describing the lamentable consequences of division and separation, amongst a people awakened, and called to the knowledge of Christ, by His minister—how separation and division lead men to conclude no one can certainly determine what the faith of Christ is; and that they serve no better purpose than to perplex and stumble the weak in faith—and give the ungodly occasion to boast, that passions and prejudices are nowhere less subdued than among the most religious.²⁵⁷

Venn wrote this letter to his son one year after Wesley’s death. Having been close to Wesleyan Methodism throughout much of his ministry, Venn would have seen the continued movement that Wesleyan Methodism had made and was speedily making toward full separation from the Church.

²⁵⁶ *Works* 26:126 (Letter To a Clerical Friend, Mar. 11, 1745). This particular letter is noteworthy. Frank Baker notes that this letter to an anonymous clergyman was definitely sent to a specific clergyman in Newcastle, but that it was likely used as a template to send to numerous clergyman with criticism of Wesleyan Methodism. See fn. 6.

²⁵⁷ *The Letters of Henry Venn, with a Memoir by John Venn* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1835, 1999), 591.

Methodist Conventicles

The accusation that Methodists around the country were founding conventicles was a serious accusation that was laden with historical complexities. Archbishop Laud had described a conventicle as “when ten or twelve or more or lesse meet together to pray, reade, preach, expound, this is a conventicle.”²⁵⁸ Such a definition would have left Wesleyan Methodists with little room to object. Wesley’s societies would have been seen as explicitly contrary to the parish structure of the Church of England.

In his 1742 letter to the clergymen of the Diocese of London, Gibson made it clear that he was convinced that the parish structure of the Church of England was essential to the spiritual well-being of England and of the parishioners individually under the care of their parish priests as trained clergymen. Gibson, ever the ecclesiastical lawyer, sounded a “sufficient warning to all who have a serious concern for religion, and a just regard to publick peace and order in Church and State” against those who would attempt to work apart from the parochial system of the Church as did the Puritans in the previous century. His call to the clergy under his care was to use the Church’s system itself as the best weapon against those who would undermine it. Gibson argued that the Church’s system, if promoted by the best endeavors of its clergymen, could:

oppose and suppress that spirit of enthusiasm, which is gone out; and which cannot be opposed and suppressed more effectually, than by preserving the bounds of parochial communion, and by every minister’s satisfying his people, in the course of a regular life and a diligent discharge of pastoral duties and offices of all kinds, that they need no other

²⁵⁸ Patrick Collinson, *From Cranmer to Sancroft* (New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), 145. For a helpful description of the “English Conventicle” as it arose during the 1640s, see 145-172.

instructions, nor any other means and helps for the saving of their souls, than those which the Church has provided for them.²⁵⁹

For Gibson, regularity in ecclesiastical practice meant peace in England and in the hearts of her Christian people. The formation of conventicles, as illicit meetings understood to undermine the community, was an affront to the Church, the peace, and to the spiritual care of souls.

The Conventicle Act, passed in 1670 under Charles II, was a direct outgrowth of the religious turmoil of the English Civil War as described so aptly by Christopher Hill in *The World Turned Upside Down*. Hill describes the religious and social extremism that was unleashed in the seventeenth century under the Commonwealth, calling the period after the execution of Charles I a period of “glorious flux and intellectual excitement.”²⁶⁰ Written from Hill’s distinctly radical perspective, the book provides a clear picture of the radical elements, the Quakers, Baptists, Rankers, Diggers, and Levellers who appeared in this period. These radicals, who questioned the legitimacy of Christ, or promoted the idea that one could be divine as Christ was divine, would have horrified the moderate churchmen of the post-Restoration period.²⁶¹ These religious radicals would have contributed to an already unsettling picture of an executed monarch, a radically Protestant church, and what Hill calls “the greatest upheaval that has yet occurred in Britain.”²⁶² Hempton notes that it was “with Puritanism in mind the with Civil War memories to the

²⁵⁹ Edmund Gibson, *Letter to the Clergy* (1742), 11.

²⁶⁰ Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: The World Turned Upside Down* (London: Temple Smith, 1972), 12.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 151-152.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 11.

forefront that Restoration lawyers and churchmen drew up the Conventicles Act.” He describes that Act as one “with draconian penalties, which magistrates were understandably reluctant to enforce.”²⁶³

The Conventicle Act itself declared that the law was implemented “to further and more speedy Remedies against the growing and dangerous practices of Seditious Sectaries and other disloyall Persons who under pretence of tender Consciences have or may at their Meetings contrive Insurrections (as late experience hath shewen).” These meetings were understood to include any indoor gathering which included five or more persons which met “under colour or pretence of any Exercise of Religion in other manner then according to the Liturgy and practice of the Church of England.”²⁶⁴ The authors, according to J. S. Simon, “must have thought that its stern provisions would crush out all religious meetings and private assemblies held ‘in other manner than is allowed by the liturgy or practice of the Church of England.’”²⁶⁵ Under this Act, an outgrowth of the Act of Uniformity, participants could be fined five shillings for a first offense, with larger penalties following.²⁶⁶ Given this reality, the Methodists themselves risked more than just their social and family connections when attending society meetings that could have been seen

²⁶³ Hempton, *Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion*, 146.

²⁶⁴ ‘Charles II, 1670: An Act to prevent and suppress Seditious Conventicles.’, *Statutes of the Realm: volume 5: 1628-80* (1819), 648-651.

²⁶⁵ J. S. Simon, “The Conventicle Act and Its Relation to the Early Methodists,” 88.

²⁶⁶ J. S. Simon wrote that, “It is interesting to note that fines on married women convicted of being present at a conventicle had to be paid by their husbands, an arrangement which, in some cases, would not promote domestic felicity,” (pg. 89).

as conventicles.²⁶⁷ Hempton notes, however, that there were not only disparities in the application of the Act, but also various interpretations of it. He notes that one interpretation of the Act, and the one that Wesley held, “was that for a conventicle to be unlawful it had to have a conspiratorial purpose.”²⁶⁸

Gibson was clear in his message to the clergy of London that “in a Christian Nation, where the Instruction and Edification of the People is provided-for, by placing Ministers in *certain Districts*, to whom the Care of the Souls within those Districts is regularly committed” the gathering of “confused Multitudes of People” can only serve to “a Disesteem of their own Pastors, as less willing or less able to instruct them in the Way of Salvation.”²⁶⁹

The Methodist leaders did not always help their case when they publicly challenged the character of Anglican clergymen in print.²⁷⁰ Walsh noted that at its very core the evangelical message of conversion was liable to be heard as a criticism to the clergyman of the Established Church. He wrote that, “the evangelical doctrine of conversion carried with it many ecclesiastical

²⁶⁷ Richard Heitzenrater describes the founding of the Methodist classes and the duty of the class leader to supplement the dues of its members who could not afford the penny a week necessary to participate. Given the reality that many Methodists could not afford the class dues, their participation in something that could be seen as a conventicle with fines beginning at five shillings should be taken into consideration. See Heitzenrater’s *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 118-119. Obviously the implementation of the law was scattered and its interpretation varied. Otherwise, this law could have put a stop to the United Societies at a very early stage of the Revival. For a description of the social and communal connections that individual Methodists risked by membership in a society, see Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 87-90.

²⁶⁸ Hempton, *Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion*, 147.

²⁶⁹ Gibson, *Letter to the Clergy*, 11.

²⁷⁰ See Wesley’s “An Address to the Clergy,” *Works (Jackson)* 10:480. Wesley, even as an Anglican, held the Puritan Baxter’s description of the parish ministry in high esteem and recommended it widely. Needs full cit of Jack.

consequences, not least the imputation that those ministers of religion who did not preach the doctrines of grace, and had not themselves experienced the forgiveness of sins, were blind guides, false prophets or dumb dogs that would not bark.”²⁷¹ Both Wesley and Whitefield published comments against the clergy early in the Revival that were well known by Gibson and others in authority. Gibson quoted Whitefield directly using Whitefield’s *Journal* as ammunition against the Revival calling it seditious. Whitefield was quoted by Gibson as claiming against the clergy:

O my dear Brethren, have Compassion on our dear Lord’s Church, which he has purchased with his own Blood. Suffer none of them to be as Sheep having no Shepherd, or worse than none, those blind Leaders of the Blind, who let them perish for lack of Knowledge, and are no better than Wolves in Sheeps-cloathing.²⁷²

And again in another journal entry:

Though we are but few, and stand as it were alone, like *Elijah*; and though they, like the Priests of *Baal*, are many in Number; yet I doubt not but the Lord will appear for us as he did for that Prophet, and make us more than Conquerors.²⁷³

These attacks on the clerical authorities of the Church of England did little to further the interests of the Revival among supporter or detractor.

There was a distinction, at times explicit, between the anti-Methodist propaganda aimed at Wesleyan Methodists and the other arms of the Revival, be they under Whitefield’s charge or within the established norms of the Church.²⁷⁴ Yet at the same time, the charge of schism was not

²⁷¹ Walsh, “Methodism and the Mob,” 219.

²⁷² George Whitefield, *Journal* 4:38, 5:31, and 32. “This Afternoon I was carried out much in bearing my Testimony against unchristian Principles and Practices of the Generality of our Clergy.” Gibson, *Observations*, 11

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

reserved simply for the Wesleyans and Whitefieldites, nor should the criticism of one particular arm of the Revival be seen as an indication that the Revival was viewed in this early period as segregated into officially designated parts. The irregular members of the Revival may have provided easier targets for the critic's pen, but that same pen was able to draw lines between Wesley and Whitefield's establishment of irregular society meetings and the attempts on the part of some Evangelicals themselves to set up societies of their own within their own parishes.

The charge of schism or social disruption was not simply a charge leveled against Methodism in the early part of the Revival. As late as 1805, the Archdeacon of Leicester, publicly declared his fear that Methodism and dissent would ultimately bring about a rejection of the monarchy in favor of a democracy and revolution among the lower classes.²⁷⁵ His explicit fear was "the dissolution of social order," a charge against Methodism that appears to be consistent throughout the eighteenth century and even into the next.

²⁷⁴ From an historiographical perspective, the separation of anti-Wesleyan Methodist propaganda from the larger anti-evangelical umbrella is a hindrance to the historical reconstruction of the period and places on the historical record a clear-cut system that resembles later divisions and the institutionalization of the movement. The term "Methodist" was not the sole property of any one segment of the Evangelical Revival, although it would in time be associated with the Wesleyan arm. That it did not, at the time, signify such a demarcation should be kept in mind by later interpreters. That present day historians classify anti-Methodist propaganda from the eighteenth century using later nineteenth and twentieth-century assumptions is problematic and represents the insular perspectives of many denominational histories.

²⁷⁵ Robert Acklom Ingram, *The Causes of the Increase of Methodism and Dissension, and other Popularity of what is called Evangelical Preaching, and the Means of Obviating Them, considered in a Sermon, preached at the Visitation of the Rev. the Archdeacon of Leicester, held at Melton Mowbray, June 20, 1805* (London: Stanhope and Tilling, 1807). It is fascinating to compare quotations such as the Archdeacon's to the later work of the Marxist historian E.P. Thompson who so famously argued for an entirely different understanding of Methodism as a manipulation of the working classes and maintainer of the *status quo*. See E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), and especially his chapter, "The Transforming Power of the Cross."

While the establishment of societies had been a common-place within the Church of England in the previous century under such organizations as the Society for the Reformation of Manners and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, the structure that was being created under John Wesley was distinctly disconnected from local clerical oversight. The Wesleys' father had set up a society of the older model in his own Epworth parish as the parish priest. Wesley claimed that the "world," i.e. England, was his "parish."

The Wesley brothers were not ignored by the church authorities of this period (as has been discussed in the previous chapter). The brothers were explicitly brought before Bishop Gibson to discuss the issue of conventicles. Both brothers commented upon their encounter with the bishop in their journals,²⁷⁶ with Charles claiming a certain sense of ambiguity on the bishop's part. It is hard to juxtapose Charles's version of Gibson with Gibson's own writings, although the specific issue discussed was the simple act of reading in a society, not the creation of a system of societies throughout England. Charles described the meeting this way:

Next my brother enquired whether his reading in a religious society made it a conventicler. His Lordship warily referred us to the laws. But upon your urging the question, "Are the religious societies conventicles?" he answered, "No, I think not. However, you can read the acts and laws as well as I. I determined nothing." We hoped his Lordship would not henceforth receive an accusation against a presbyter, but at the mouth of two or three witnesses. He said, "No, by no means. And you may have free access to me at all times." We thanked him, and took our leave.²⁷⁷

What the reader will note in Charles Wesley's description of his and his brother's encounters with bishops during the early part of the Revival is a mixture of support and caution. The bishops were

²⁷⁶ Wesley, October 20, 1738, *Works* 19:359.

²⁷⁷ Charles Wesley, *Manuscript Journal*, 1:151.

keen to support loyal priests of the Church of England. They had no reason to suppress valid Anglican expressions. They cautioned the brothers, however, on their methods.

In a meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1739, Charles records the Primate encouraging the brothers to “give no more umbrage than was necessary,” to “forbear exceptionable phrases,” and “to keep to the doctrines of the Church.” They assured Archbishop Potter, the same man who had ordained them at Oxford that they would keep to the Church “till her Articles and Homilies were repealed.” He knew of no effort to repeal any of them, nor would he support such efforts.²⁷⁸

The place of dissent in English society and the creation of conventicles questioned the Church of England’s hegemonic place as *the* Established Church. As such these issues were of both political and social importance. What the creation of Wesley’s ecclesiastical substructure did within the context of the eighteenth century was to produce political issues that Wesley was never fully aware of nor cared to address as he felt propelled to proclaim the New Birth by almost any means.

Wesley and the Question of Dissent

The question of Wesley’s relationship to Evangelical Anglican clergy must be seen within the larger question of Wesley’s relationship with the general clergy and the thorny issue of Methodism’s relationship to the Church of England and dissent. From the very beginning of the Methodist revival the accusation had been made that Wesley and those associated with him were

²⁷⁸ Charles Wesley, *Manuscript Journal*, 1:162-163 (February 21, 1739).

simply dissenters. This had little to do with the message of the Wesleys, but much to do with their methods. Frank Baker notes that on Wesley's part, "Whatever deliberate separation from the Church of England took place during Wesley's ministry was primarily in the realm of deeds rather than of thought."²⁷⁹ And yet Baker's less critical remarks need to be balanced by those like Hempton's who reminds the student of the period that:

The fact that an erstwhile Oxford high churchman like Wesley could bring himself, as a mere priest, to ordain preachers for America and Scotland in 1784-85 (much to the chagrin of his brother Charles) shows how far he was prepared to break the rule of the Church to fulfil his mission.²⁸⁰

From the very beginning of the Revival, Wesley's allegiance to Anglicanism was questioned by family, friends, and opponents. In a letter from his older brother Samuel Wesley, Jr., written in April of 1739, Samuel writes: "My mother tells me she fears a formal schism is already begun among you, though you and Charles are ignorant of it. For God's sake take care of that, and banish extemporary expositions and extemporary prayers."²⁸¹

In a 1745 tract entitled *The Question of Whether it Be Right to Turn Methodist*, the author of the tract created a dialogue "between two members of the Church of England" in which the question of whether or not to become a Methodist was never in doubt. The tract had been written to provide "as seasonable, as well as more reasonable, Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, than

²⁷⁹Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 3.

²⁸⁰ Hempton, "John Wesley in Context," 64.

²⁸¹*Works*, 25:634 (A Letter from the Revd. Samuel Wesley, Jun.).

what we have lately seen under that Title.”²⁸² Wesley had published his *Appeal* in 1743 and would publish a further appeal in 1745. Albert Outler described these Appeals as “Wesley’s most important apologia for his own doctrine and for his movement as an evangelical order within the national church—beset as it was by the apathy of nominal Christianity and by the rising tides of rationalism and unbelief.”²⁸³

Although, as Outler notes, these Appeals bore “the tags of his Oxford education”²⁸⁴ and according to Wesley’s *Journal* made noticeable impact on many of his detractors,²⁸⁵ the author of the *Question* saw the creation of Methodism’s structure in distinctly High Church terms as a “great Danger of further Apostasy from the best-constituted Church in the World” and reason enough “for the Publication.”²⁸⁶ Methodism was understood as a “sect” that had separated from the Established Church.

The point of the author’s Anglican hero is that the unity of the Church is shattered by Methodism and any other sect in England that would attempt to remove members from the Church of England. Regardless of the doctrines in question, the ultimate question is what is the Church and subsequently whether the Church of England is a true expression of this larger

²⁸² *The Question, Whether it be Right to Turn Methodist, Considered. In a Dialogue Between Two Members of the Church of England* (London: 1745), 1.

²⁸³ Outler, *John Wesley*, 384.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 385.

²⁸⁵ See *Works* 20:106, 112, 202, 249.

²⁸⁶ *The question, whether it be right to turn Methodist*, 7.

Catholic vision. Expounding a vision of the Church of England much like later Tracterians would in the next century, the author claimed:

One Member of this universal Kingdom of Christ is the *Church of England*; for no one will say, but that she is a *National*, yea the *only* National Church in this *Realm*; because she, and she alone, is the Church *Establish'd* here *by the Laws of the Land*. And herein she is not only a member of, but she bears the exact Image of, the Catholick Church: For as that, tho' consisting of many *National* Churches, is but One in the World; so our Church, tho' partitioned into sundry particular *Diocesan* and *Parochial* Churches, as members of the same Body, is but One Church in this Kingdom.²⁸⁷

Ironically, this description of the Church was very similar to the words of the Wesleys themselves. At issue was whether or not the setting up of societies separate from parish structures constituted schism.

The English people of this period had a long historical memory. In many places the ecclesiastical skirmishes of the past were etched into the very buildings in which they worshiped. Among the remains of the iconoclasts were missing appendages on saints and roods and plain windows where stained glass had once been. The English people could see these ecclesiastical and political skirmishes whenever they entered their parish church. Not only were Puritans of the time fearful of a resurrected Bishop Laud, but many within the Established Church were keenly aware of any tendency within their ranks toward Cromwellianism.²⁸⁸ Rack writes that “one can hardly

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ During the American Revolution of the 1770s, many Loyalist Anglicans in the colonies saw the American patriots as “the descendents of Oliver Cromwell’s army.” See Margaret Wheeler Willard, ed., *Letters on the American Revolution, 1774-1776* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), 120; and William H. Nelson, *The American Tory* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), 85-91. Many colonial Anglicans feared that the patriots’ goal was to outlaw Anglicanism, much as the Puritans did during the Commonwealth. See Hain and Shattuck, *The Episcopalians* (New York: Church Publishing, 2004), 40.

over-emphasize the extent to which the seventeenth-century horrors haunted the inherited memories and fed the fears of eighteenth-century people,” noting that as late as the end of the eighteenth century the “old war-cries of ‘Church and King’ and ‘Down with the Rump’ current in the 1650s could be repeated against Dissenters.”²⁸⁹

Seen within the context of this heightened historical memory, the mobs who attacked and intimidated many of the early Methodist preachers and Wesley himself, regardless of later Methodist hagiography, were actually means by which a largely defunct legal system could maintain public order against a possible menace. Describing the violence used by these mobs, Walsh wrote:

Of the violence actually inflicted, a considerable portion was aimed at psychological humiliation rather than corporeal injury: this as the purpose of the stripping of clothes, the rolling of dungheaps and kennels. Its object was often a show of collective strength which would strike such terror into a preacher that he would pledge himself never to return to the parish. It says much for the fervour of the preachers that it very seldom worked.²⁹⁰

Walsh describes the participants of these mobs as “moved by ideas as well as irrational drives.”

These same participants, however, “not infrequently felt their actions justified in terms of social necessity or religious duty. There were villagers who felt that the Church Militant had the right to use a certain amount of deterrent force against those who threatened it.”²⁹¹ Such mobs could be seen as a means to prevent civil strife of a larger and more serious kind, whether dissenting or Jacobite. G. C. B. Davies notes that “the rioting which John Wesley encountered at Falmouth, for

²⁸⁹ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 29.

²⁹⁰ Walsh, “Methodism and the Mob,” 215

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 221.

example, was directly attributed to fear of the young Prince Charles.”²⁹² Davies goes on to write that “it should be borne in mind, when considering this question, that many clergy were also magistrates, and their hostile attitude was not only on doctrinal and personal grounds, but also on grounds of maintaining the public peace in face of possible rioting and disturbance.”²⁹³ This is precisely why Gregory has noted in his work on Anglicanism and the continued task of reformation in this period that “there was . . . a tension between the clergy’s role as ordained ministers of a comprehensive Church and as leaders of a religious community.”²⁹⁴ The role of a clergyman at the time could be entirely varied within the sprawling parish where he served. And in order to maintain a decent living-wage he might have to take on multiple charges.²⁹⁵

However ironic it may seem, the same loose structure that allowed for mob policing allowed for the growth of Methodism as a church within a church. It is certain that Methodism would not have been able to rise up within a church whose ecclesiastical discipline had been strictly enforced. Baker notes the difficulties related to the enforcement of English ecclesiastical law. He wrote that “the 141 *Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical* of 1603 formed a body of law which could in dire need be invoked against miscreants or annoying innovation, but they were neither devoid of ambiguity nor easy to enforce.”²⁹⁶ Wesley’s maverick use of Anglican polity and

²⁹²G. C. B. Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 27.

²⁹³*Ibid.*, 28.

²⁹⁴Jeremy Gregory, “The eighteenth-century Reformation: the pastoral task of Anglican clergy after 1689,” 81.

²⁹⁵Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 24.

his tight-rope interpretations of canon law, parish structures, and laws meant to govern dissent were argued based on a benevolent interpretation of Methodist actions and a specific reading of the law's original intent. Hempton describes the debate over Methodism's legal standing under English law as "one of the most controversial legal problems of the period between 1740 and 1820."²⁹⁷ He describes Wesley's argument as essentially that "Methodists were not dissenters, therefore the Toleration Act was irrelevant to them."²⁹⁸ Of course, the argument was much more nuanced, and Hempton writes that Wesley's argument pivoted on key interpretations of the law and Methodist practice including the idea that "the Conventicles Act was designed to 'provide remedies against sedition.' Methodists were not seditious, quite the reverse." Additionally:

Field preaching was legal in theory and safe in practice because it was conducted in daylight to known crowds which were much smaller than both Methodists and Anglicans alleged. If ordination was properly understood to be for a gospel ministry, not a specific territorial location, then itinerant preaching was not an offence against the Church.²⁹⁹

It is hard to tell exactly what the original intention of the authors of the Conventicle Act and the Act of Uniformity was for field preaching, although J. S. Simon wrote in his work on Methodism's relation to the Conventicle Act that "it is evident that conventicles held in the open air were unlawful assemblies. Every one acquainted with the religious history of the seventeenth century is

²⁹⁶ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 14.

²⁹⁷ Hempton, *Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion*, 146.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

aware that such was the opinion of those who administered the Act.”³⁰⁰ This distinction between the intention of the Act and its administration was key to Wesley’s legal argument.

An example of the distinction between the law’s intention and its administration can be seen in a letter from 1747 written by Bishop Edward Chandler of Durham. Chandler was no friend to Methodism. He once described the preachers as “insolent boys.”³⁰¹ His caution when dealing with crowds of Methodists, however, is evidence of the legal limbo that allowed Methodism to continue. In his letter to the Rev. Sharpe, also of Durham, he wrote:

I have indeed one doubt, whether a number of people gathered without arms and attempting no injury to any person can be treated as riotous; any more than a mob about a Ballad singer, or a crowd about a mounteback, and therefore I cannot advise it absolutely, but if the Churchwardens or others will make the tryal, they may, but in case the people will not disperse upon the reading, it will not be advisable to go further.³⁰²

This admiration for the law, its application relative to the situation, and for civil order was keenly observed within the volatile social context of the period and can be seen in most ecclesiastical figures of the time. The complex situation in which these laws were interpreted, though, also added to the confusion over their implementation. According to Hempton:

The issue was further complicated by legal ignorance in the localities, genuine confusion about the precise limits of toleration afforded by post-Restoration statutes, uncertainties about the respective responsibilities of church courts and quarter sessions in controlling

³⁰⁰ J. S. Simon, “The Conventicle Act and Its Relation to the Early Methodists,” 82-83.

³⁰¹ See Walsh, “Methodism and the Mob,” 219, and *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 28, 1951-52, pg. 49.

³⁰² Written 15 July 1747 to the Revd Sharpe, Prebendary of and at Durham. Wesley F. Swift, “Headingley Papers,” *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* 28 (1951-52), 49.

religious deviance and, more prosaically, about who should bear the burden of legal costs.³⁰³

Hempton notes that Wesley's principles were "easier to defend in learned debate than they were in English localities," and that this defense was made difficult at a time of "foreign warfare and domestic instability when tolerance had to accept the inconveniences of Methodism's uncertain legal position" and when Methodists themselves were applying for certificates under the Act of Toleration fairly early in the Revival to "guard against intimidation."³⁰⁴ Additionally, Wesley's ability to perform irregularities, as they were seen by him and his critics at the time, can and should be seen in light of the decline of church courts and the rising acceptance of dissent throughout the eighteenth century.

Methodism arose when ecclesiastical control was often weak. But as Hempton has pointed out, this statement must be geographically tempered. They did not take root in the southeastern portion of the country, for instance, where parishes were more prevalent and there was thus greater clerical oversight. In fact, Hempton and Walsh have shown that Methodists lived often times on the outskirts of parishes themselves.³⁰⁵ The lack of ecclesiastical coordination and the structuring of parish boundaries were both important aspects involved in Methodist growth. What this "Methodist geography" indicates is that Methodists were a marginal people even

³⁰³ Hempton, *Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion*, 146.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

³⁰⁵ Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, especially 18-23.

geographically speaking.³⁰⁶

Given this context, Methodist irregularities may have been allowed, but their effects on Methodism's relationship with the Church of England and specifically on Wesley's relationship with the Evangelical clergy were detrimental. At issue is the definition of dissent. Was a dissenter one who had to be in explicit secession from the Established Church as Wesley contended, or was a dissenter anyone who practiced any form of unauthorized ministry? This elusively defined term was used by persons on various sides of the debates over Methodism's rightful designation.

From the beginning, Methodism was seen by many clergy as dissenting. Davies notes that in Cornwall, the Methodists were known as dissenters by some of the Anglican clergymen in reports from the 1740s.³⁰⁷ The question is what gave the clergy this impression. Davies states that what is "noteworthy in these and other replies is the tendency for the Methodists to be accounted Dissenters" and that "this feeling was already hardening in other parts of the country, though some remain dubious."³⁰⁸ Ironically, the Methodists were themselves debating how the public impression of Methodism should be managed. In conversation with his brother, Charles, and Samuel Walker, both Evangelical clergy, Wesley was faced with the question of the public

³⁰⁶Hempton has also pointed out that Methodist growth outside of England was principally in areas where Anglicanism had already taken root. In this way Methodism was able to grow in parts of the American colonies where Anglicanism was strong, but had little or no affect in Roman Catholic parts of the world like France. What would be interesting for the current topic would be to see if Methodist growth in England corresponded to evangelical efforts, broadly conceived. Did Methodism grow in Cornwall, for instance, because of the strong evangelical presence there, as opposed to Manchester which had, until at least the middle of the century, a strong Jacobite, and thus likely High Church Anglican, constituency?

³⁰⁷Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 25.

³⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 26.

impression of Methodism as a paramount issue in the very early days of the Revival. What has often been overlooked by many who have discussed the issue of Wesley's relationship to Evangelical clergy is the effect of this public impression on Methodism which from the beginning was thought to be detrimental to Methodist/Evangelical relations by both parties. In order to stem the impression that Methodism was somehow distinct from Anglicanism, attention was given to the way in which Methodist leaders spoke of the movement.

Wesley's own acceptance of dissenters into the Methodist fold did nothing to help the public impression of Methodism. Despite his own Anglican status, he did not require that members of his society be members of the Church of England. This liberality simply reinforced Methodism's dissenting status among many. Ironically, the Fetter Lane Society, from which Wesley broke in 1739 and which was thought to be run by Moravians, required that its members be members of the Church of England. Once Wesley broke from the Fetter Lane Society and founded his London headquarters at the Foundry, the requirement was dropped.³⁰⁹

Methodist lay preacher, John Bennet, and his work in northern England is a prime example of the fluidity of evangelicalism, dissent, and Methodism. His societies were taken into Wesleyan Methodism around 1744, but after Bennet's marriage to Grace Murray in 1750, whom Wesley had intended to marry, there was a break between the two men. Subsequently, Bennet attempted to recreate his old northern connection of societies. This attempt met with varied success, largely because of Wesley's control of much of the property. Nonetheless in Bolton,

³⁰⁹ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 78.

according to Rack, Bennet “captured 107 out of the 126 members.”³¹⁰ Such examples show not only the fluidity of the Evangelical Revival of the time, but the importance of personal connections and loyalties. Many people were more committed to various personalities than structures, thus revealing one of the risks of voluntary associations.

Fletcher and Walker: Evangelical Societies

Evangelical clergy were not, as a group, against the notion of societies for the edification of believers within their parishes. Walsh wrote that “Evangelical parish clergy were well aware that the piety they aroused could not easily be contained within the liturgical framework of the Church, even when its Sunday services were enlivened by sermons and augmented by family prayers.”³¹¹ For this very reason, Charles Simeon would later become a major promoter of Evangelical societies. The concern that most Evangelicals showed for Wesley’s system was its independence from the established structures of the Church’s parish system and the oversight of local clergy, including Evangelical incumbents. Some, like Fletcher, William Grimshaw, and Charles Perronet encouraged the founding of Wesleyan societies, although Fletcher was more cautious in his support than were the latter two. Perronet had a Methodist society led by his daughter that met in his kitchen.³¹²

³¹⁰Rack, “Survival and Revival,” 14.

³¹¹ Walsh, “Religious Societies, Methodist and Evangelical: 1738-1800” in *Voluntary Religion: Papers Read at the 1985 Summer Meeting and the 1986 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical Historical Society*, W.J. Shields and Diana Wood, eds. (London: 1986), 295.

³¹² Wesley, August 14, 1744, *Works* 20:35, fn. 74.

Newton, ever the moderate, wrote in a letter to a postulant for holy orders in the Church his concern that the postulant be careful when speaking to societies. He did not forbid the practice, nor even discourage it. Newton wrote as late as 1770, even after the expulsions from Oxford two years before:

And therefore as your years and time are advancing, and you have been for a tolerable space under probation of silence, I can make no objection to your attempting sometimes to speak in select societies; but let your attempts be confined to such, I mean where you are acquainted with the people, or the leading part of them, and be upon your guard against opening yourself too much amongst strangers;—and again, I earnestly desire you would not attempt any thing of this sort in a very public way, which may perhaps bring you under inconveniencies, and will be inconsistent with the part you ought to act (in my judgment) from the time you receive Episcopal ordination.³¹³

This moderate stance, obviously full of caution, was not uncommon for Newton. He was distinctly ecumenical in his engagement with and encouragement of all Christians. Yet he was well aware of the dangers of acting the part of a dissenter while attempting to remain within the Establishment.³¹⁴ Newton, himself, had faced problems simply attaining ordination on account of his evangelical connections.³¹⁵

Walker, ever the ecclesiastical conservative, was one of the leading Evangelicals who started societies in his Cornwall parish. Walker's society was founded in the year 1754, well after Wesley's societies became a force on the ecclesiastical scene in the previous decade.³¹⁶ Walsh describes

³¹³ Newton, Letter IV, Aug. 30, 1770, *Cardiphonia*, 2:60.

³¹⁴ In another letter in the *Cardiphonia* collection, Newton counseled an anonymous "Methodist" who was apparently becoming or had become an Independent. See his letter of Aug. 31, 1757, 2:68-70.

³¹⁵ Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, 83-118.

Walker's society as "an Anglican alternative to the irregular societies of John Wesley."³¹⁷ Fletcher, an ecclesiastical moderate, seems to have discovered societies springing up within his parish without his direct involvement. He noted in his correspondence "a little society of about 20 or 30 people has come together of its own accord" in Madeley Wood, and "another of some 20" in Coalbrookdale, also known as the "the dale."³¹⁸ Societies for both laity and clergy were not uncommon in Evangelical parishes. They were uncommon, however, in the generality of Anglican parishes.

What distinguished the Evangelical societies from Wesley's societies at a fundamental level was the Evangelical's insistence upon maintaining direct oversight of the societies within their parishes and the common use of established rules and patterns for running them. Rack described Evangelical societies as "parochially-based societies, usually under close clerical supervision."³¹⁹ Walker, for instance, based his societies directly on those promulgated and popularized in the early part of the century by Josiah Woodward.³²⁰ Woodward's model of societies was used by Samuel Wesley and may have inspired the use later by his sons. The Woodward model assumed clerical

³¹⁶ Wesley visited some members of Walker's society briefly in August of 1755. He records in his *Journal*: "As I was riding through Truro, one stopped my horse and insisted on my alighting. Presently two or three more of Mr. Walker's society came in, and we seemed to have been acquainted with each other for many years" (*Works* 21:25).

³¹⁷ Walsh, "Religious Societies," 297.

³¹⁸ Peter Forsaith, ed., *Unexamined Labours*, 130 (Letter from Fletcher to Charles Wesley, 27 April 1761).

³¹⁹ Rack, "Religious Societies and the Origins of Methodism," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 38 (1987), 583.

³²⁰ See Josiah Woodward, *An Account of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, in London and Westminster, and other Parts of the Kingdom. With a Persuasive to Persons of all Ranks, to be Zealous and Diligent in Promoting the Execution of the Laws against Prophaness and Debauchery, for the Effecting A National Reformation, Published with the Approbation of a Considerable Number of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal* (London: printed for B. Aylmer, at Three Pigeons in Cornhill, 1699).

oversight, although the Wesleyan use of laymen and women became a hallmark of the Methodist movement. Indeed, it was rare for an Evangelical to allow lay oversight of his societies, although John Baddeley, Rector of Hayfield in Derbyshire, appointed laymen to assist him, and Henry Venn was only able to visit his societies monthly because of the size of his parish.³²¹ Davies notes that Evangelical James Hervey left behind a society at Bideford and Thomas Vivian at Cornwood maintained a “class” of his own parishioners for many years.³²²

Walker’s society had a distinctly Anglican flavor and maintained a discipline that attempted to maintain that connectedness to the Establishment. The rules of the society indicate a desire on the part of its participants to evade the commonly-held negative assumptions of Wesley’s societies and their dissenting counterparts. Walker formed his society with the full support of Whitefield and Berridge, whom he consulted before founding it.³²³ He was convinced in forming the society, as he was in his parish work, that it could be done for the edification of souls within the structures and according to the expectations of the Established Church. This balance between Evangelical practice and Established norms characterized Walker’s entire ministry. His letters to Wesley throughout the 1750s not only highlight this fact, but were part of Walker’s attempts to convince Wesley of the necessity of a similar approach.³²⁴ Walker’s approach to reform and

³²¹ Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 66; Walsh, “Religious Societies,” 296.

³²² Davies, 66.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

³²⁴ Walker’s and Wesley’s correspondence began in the Fall of 1755. See Sept. 5, 1755 From the Revd. Samuel Walker, in *Works* 26:582. The correspondence continued until the year of Walker’s death, 1761. Davies writes

evangelism was similar in temperament to his Archbishop's who wrote: "Hoping for perfection in any human thing, is visionary; and murmuring for want of it, is resolving never to be happy; and taking irregular methods to obtain it, is the sure way to be wretched."³²⁵

The rules of Walker's society offer an insider look at the workings of this particular Evangelical society. Walker founded the society by issuing a letter to potential participants with a detailed list of the society's polity. His letter provides a tri-part structure: "I lay before you the design of this Society, and give you some cautions concerning it. The design is threefold: 1. To glorify God. 2. To be quickened and confirmed ourselves. 3. To render us more useful among our neighbours."³²⁶

The society was not unlike others in the tradition of the English Church in that the members were encouraged to "watch over one another in love," "be willing to hear your faults," and "desire the prayers" of others.³²⁷ In classic evangelical style the members were explicitly to "Discountenance all such things as you see prejudicial to others, such as taverns, alehouses, gaming, and many sports which are destructive of souls."³²⁸ The evangelical tendency to eschew

concerning the correspondence: "The Walker-Wesley correspondence made clear the line on which the two parties, Methodists and Evangelicals, were to proceed: the Methodists into formal separation due to administration of the Sacraments by the former lay preachers; and the Evangelicals in loyal adherence to the parochial system, seeking to quicken their parishioners and united when possible with their clerical brethren" (Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 220).

³²⁵ Archbishop Thomas Secker as quoted in Ingram, *Religion, Reform and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century*, 9.

³²⁶ Samuel Walker. *Fifty Two Sermons*, 1: xxx.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, xxxii.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, xxxiii.

certain popular vices was common throughout the period and did not add to their popularity among an already suspicious public.

The rules concerning the membership of the society and its oversight distinguish it from Wesley's societies. This was a society for members of the Church of England in good standing with their parish priest, and under his direct oversight. Walker's concern in setting up his society as strictly connected to the Established Church was two-fold. He insisted that connection to the Church would not only better support the spiritual welfare of the society's participants, but would guard it against the opposition and suspicions of others. The second rule of the society makes this point plain:

That in order to the being of one heart, and one mind, and to prevent all things which gender strifes, as well as to remove all occasion of offence from being taken against this Society, no person is to be admitted a Member or allowed to continue such, who is a member of any other meeting, or follows any other preaching than that of the established ministry of the Church of *England*—That none be Members but such as attend the Sacrament every month, and that no person be at any time introduced except by request of the Director.³²⁹

And the society's third rule made it plain that "the Director be the Reverend Mr WALKER."³³⁰

Walker not only established societies for the betterment of those laity under his care, but founded a society for Evangelical clergy that ultimately solidified his place as one of the leading voices of the Evangelical Revival *within* the Church of England. Davies described Walker as "the

³²⁹ Ibid., xxxiv-v

³³⁰ Ibid., xxxv

leader of the ‘awakened’ clergy” in Cornwall, one of the two major centers of Evangelical influence during the early period of the Revival.³³¹

The clerical society that Walker founded was “composed of the neighbouring Clergy,” and like the society that Walker led for lay persons, the clerical “club” was conducted with “proper regulations.” One of the participants of the club wrote in a letter:

‘Mr WALKER was the person who first proposed a friendly meeting of neighbouring Clergymen, with a view to improve one another in Christian knowledge, for the better edification of the people committed to their care, and to encourage each other if, as it was likely, any difficulty or opposition should arise to either of them in the more vigorous discharge of the ministerial duty.’³³²

Like the society for lay persons, the clerical society soon gained the negative attention of both clergy and laity “as if the whole Society was methodistically inclined.” All members of the society were required by its own regulations to be members “zealously attached” to the Church of England.³³³ The social stigma attached throughout the early period of the Revival to small groups of any kind was simply stronger than the good intentions of those who set them up for reasons of religious edification. These religious intentions could not assuage the political and social fears of their opponents. And soon enough after Walker’s death the majority of his parish did leave the Church of England for dissent, fulfilling the prophecies of the opponents of this distinctly establishmentarian Evangelical.

³³¹ Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 53.

³³² Samuel Walker, *Fifty Two Sermons*, xviii-xix.

³³³ *Ibid.*

The letters of John Fletcher to his Evangelical colleagues paint a different picture of the societies in his parish than Walker's official rules do of those in Cornwall. Fletcher, as has already been noted, experienced the tangential nature of the Revival with societies springing up within his parish without his initiative. These letters, mainly to Charles Wesley, paint the picture of a parish at odds with a new Evangelical incumbent. Fletcher, appointed vicar of Madeley in 1760 much to the vexation of John Wesley, faced adamant opposition to his evangelical preaching and his acceptance of religious societies.

Madeley parish in the heart of Shropshire and thus the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution ultimately became a stronghold of Church Methodism during Fletcher's incumbency and later after his death under the influence of his wife, Mary Bosanquet Fletcher.³³⁴ The letters indicate that during the first decade of Fletcher's tenure he encountered opposition at the parish level in nearly all the principal ways that the Revival itself did on a national scale. This opposition included accusations that Fletcher was a Jesuit in disguise, a schismatic, and an enthusiast. He was opposed not only by ecclesiastical authorities, but also dragged before civil authorities. Within two years of his coming to Madeley, Fletcher was threatened with prison by the magistrate for allowing a cottage meeting to take place within the bounds of his parish.³³⁵

³³⁴ Forsaith claims that "Madeley was one of the last parishes where Methodism remained within the Church of England" (Forsaith, *Unexampled Labours*, 20). The longevity of Church Methodism in Madeley was a direct outgrowth of the ministry of Mary Bosanquet Fletcher. For an analysis of the broader phenomenon of Church Methodism see Gareth Lloyd, "'Croakers and Busybodies': The Extent and Influence of Church Methodists in the Late 18th and Early 19th Centuries," in *Methodist History* 42 (2003), 20-32; and John Lenton, *John Wesley's Preachers: A Social and Statistical Analysis of the British and Irish Preachers Who Entered the Methodist Itinerancy before 1791*, Studies in Evangelical History and Thought (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 37.

Although Fletcher obviously practiced a regular Anglican ministry within the parish structure of the Established Church, his ties to Methodism and to the Wesley brothers made him an easy target for anti-Methodist sentiment. The words of the anonymous author who warned a colleague about even being associated with Methodism can be easily applied to the experience of Fletcher. The author of the tract warned that “The tenacity which the Methodists practice has to revive all those mad and mischievous proceedings [of an irregular ministry like the Commonwealth Period] and the countenance it has given to the revival of them in many parts of the kingdom, create a very strong prejudice against their advocates.”³³⁶ Fletcher was an advocate of Methodism. And yet he was an advocate firmly planted within the regular ministry of the Establishment.

Peter Forsaith, in his recent work on Fletcher and his letters, has plainly shown that once Fletcher was assigned to Madeley, he was firmly established as a regular member of the Church’s ministry. John Wesley’s insistence that Fletcher would become the leader of United Societies after he and his brother’s deaths, and his interpretation of Fletcher’s ministry in his funeral sermon, has created a picture of Fletcher that Forsaith argues is not historically accurate.³³⁷ In blunt terms, Forsaith has written that “Wesley’s Short Account [of Fletcher’s life] might be dismissed as the work of an idiosyncratic and egocentric octogenarian with mild amnesia.”³³⁸

³³⁵ Forsaith, *Unexampled Labours*, 143 (Fletcher to Charles Wesley, 16 May 1762).

³³⁶ *An Address to the Right Honourable _____*, 7.

³³⁷ See Wesley, Sermon 114 “On the Death of John Fletcher” in *Works* 3:610-630.

³³⁸ Forsaith, *Unexampled Labours*, 5.

Fletcher declared in a letter to Charles Wesley in June of 1762 that a “Young clergyman” whom Forsaith believes to be a “Mr. Hinton” has “openly declared war on me.”³³⁹ The young clergyman had apparently with Lutheran finesse attached his accusations against Fletcher to the door of St. Michael’s Church. The accusations he made against Fletcher included “Rebellion of Schism” and “being a disturber of the public peace.” The young clergyman lived in Madeley Wood, the same area of the parish where a society had sprung up and gained Fletcher’s blessing. Soon this young clergyman and others in the parish wanted to charge Fletcher with breaking the Conventicle Act and had had a layman arrested “who read and prayed one day that I was not able to be at the meeting.”³⁴⁰ Martin Madan, an Evangelical clergyman in London, cautioned Fletcher that the Conventicle Act could be used against those lay persons who had gathered without Fletcher.³⁴¹ Soon after, Fletcher attempted to form a society distinctly under his oversight.

Even under Fletcher’s oversight, the climate in Madeley was firmly set against a society. Fletcher’s bishop was silent on the matter, which Fletcher interpreted to mean that the bishop did not know “how to disapprove; & dares not to approve this Methodist way of proceeding.”³⁴² He still continued to preach throughout his parish, leaving Madeley on Easter Day in 1765 to “sacrifice the last remnant of my reputation” and preach outdoors at the Coal-pit Bank, about five miles from St. Michael’s. As depicted in so many of Wesley’s accounts, there were too many people

³³⁹ Ibid., 143, 147. Fletcher to Charles Wesley, 16 May 1762 and 8 June 1762.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 147, Fletcher to Charles Wesley, 8 June 1762.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid., 166 (Fletcher to John Wesley, 22 November 1762).

to fit into a local house and so Fletcher preached outdoors. He later wrote to Charles Wesley, “our timorous people think all is over now, & I shall be turned out of my Living” the thought of which he claimed left him “without Anxiety.”³⁴³

Staying the Course

John Wesley would never give up the use of his societies, classes, and bands. Nor would he back down in the face of accusations that he was planting conventicles throughout the kingdom. Wesley strongly felt that the use of the societies was essential to the spread of the gospel. His criticism of Whitefield for not creating a structure of societies to gather up those who had heard him preach is well known.³⁴⁴ Neither did Wesley ever seem to accept that his promotion of these means could be understood to be seditious or politically volatile.³⁴⁵ The ghost of the Cromwellian Commonwealth was never a spirit Wesley seems to have taken seriously. Within the context of eighteenth-century English moderation in the post-Restoration period, the use of societies by both Wesley and the Evangelicals continued to cause many to question the allegiances of both parties. As Wesley’s societies spread, however, Wesley began not only to raise the ire of his opponents, but with the incursion of Wesleyan Methodist societies and lay preachers in Evangelical parishes, a

³⁴³ Ibid., 206.

³⁴⁴ Rack argues that Whitefield did not want a connexion, although one formed without the hierarchy and structure of Wesley’s; see *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 282.

³⁴⁵ See Wesley’s sermon, “On the Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel,” *Works* 3:577-93, and his “Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion” (*Works* 11:37-94), and “Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, Part I” (*Works* 11:95-202). On his adamant insistence that he was not a schismatic and intended his followers to remain within the Church, see his sermon “Of the Church” (*Works* 3:45-57), and his tract “Ought We to Separate from the Church of England” in Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, Appendix, 326-340.

whole new level of tension and opposition was created. Wesley now had to attend to the complaints of his Evangelical colleagues who were losing their patience with Wesley's cavalier disregard for ecclesiastical protocol.

Wesley was not left to his own devices as early as the 1760s. Samuel Walker continued to caution him, but Walker's early death left ecclesiastical conservatism with one less voice in the inner circles of Methodism. Charles Wesley would continue to caution his brother and was a persistent voice for restraint. Yet even the Methodist-friendly Fletcher would begin to question Wesley's use of lay preachers when they began to cause him trouble in his Madeley parish. Fletcher was not the only Evangelical to be concerned with these Wesleyan Methodist incursions, and the strain that these incursions placed on Wesley's relationship to the Evangelical clergy is the topic to which we now turn.

CHAPTER SIX

EVANGELICAL ENCLAVES AND METHODIST INCURSIONS

Keep, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy Church with thy perpetual mercy; and because the frailty of man without thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable for our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect for the fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

One key factor in any discussion of John Wesley's relationship to Evangelical clergy is the army of lay preachers that gave allegiance to him through the structures of Wesleyan Methodism and the part they play in the earliest period of Methodism—this often tangential group of men were Wesley's "helpers" and their very existence created tension between Wesley and the majority of his Evangelical colleagues. The lay preachers of Wesley's Methodism were a key dynamic in the unhurried divide that would take place between Wesley and the Church of England. It was their ultimate ordination at the hands of Wesley in 1784 that many see as the end of Wesleyan Methodism's mission within the Church. Yet the events of 1784 did not appear out of thin air. Arguments over the place or status of Wesley's assistants raged from the 1740s onward. These arguments over the place and function of the lay preachers fueled the continued separation between Wesley and the Church, but especially his connection to the Evangelicals.

Wesley did not necessarily control the lay preachers under his charge. These "sons in the Gospel" and "helpers" in the cause became throughout the century an increasingly independent sub-clerical class within the structures of Wesley's Methodism. Walsh writes that Wesley "persisted in regarding Methodism as no more than his own private army; the mere aggregate of those he had

permitted as an act of grace to join him, on his own terms.” And yet Walsh adds that this view of an all-powerful Wesley “was a view which became rapidly at odds with reality as his movement took on a life of its own.”³⁴⁶ As such, they were neither clergy nor layman within Methodism. The preachers held a state of ecclesiastical limbo, an indeterminate state which Wesley helped to create. For example, Wesley’s *Address to the Clergy*, written in 1756, is essentially the same instruction he gave to his preachers.³⁴⁷ And the role model he held up for his preachers was none other than a seventeenth-century dissenting clergyman, Richard Baxter.³⁴⁸ This limbo helped to create a context in which some of Wesley’s helpers thought of themselves more as his colleagues, and as his colleagues they were willing to clash with both Wesley brothers as though they had clerical orders themselves.

The conference that Wesley founded in 1744 as a body of advisors and a means to direct the lay preachers took on a life of its own as it continued to evolve throughout the 1750s and

³⁴⁶ Walsh, “John Wesley 1703-1791,” 8. See *Letters* (Telford) 4:375-376 (Wesley to Dr. Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, 26 November 1762).

³⁴⁷ *Works* (Jackson) 10:480-500. This particular tract produced significant backlash. William Law called it “empty babble, fitter for an old grammarian who has grown bleary-eyed in mending dictionaries” (*Letters* (Telford) 4:184). Others publicly denounced the letter. See for example, Anonymous, *A Letter to the Revd. Mr. John Wesley; occasioned by his address to the clergy, February 6, 1756. By One of that Clergy* (London: Printed for M. Cooper, 1756); James Buller, *A Reply, to the Rev. Mr. Wesley’s Address to the Clergy* (Bristol: Printed by S. Farley, 1756); and Richard Fawcett, *An Expostulatory Letter to the Rev. Mr. Wesley: Occasioned by His Address to the Clergy* (London: Printed for J. Wilkie, 1757).

³⁴⁸ Wesley often recommended Baxter’s *Reformed Pastor*. Rack notes that Baxter’s *Call to the Unconverted* was frequently mentioned in the conversion stories of Evangelicals and may help to explain the Calvinism of most Evangelicals; see *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 176. Dewey Wallace describes Baxter as one who “wanted a ‘reduced episcopacy,’ or ‘primitive episcopacy’ such as had been proposed by Archbishop James Ussher of Armagh in Ireland, an episcopacy without dictatorial bishops lording it over the general body of clergy, and which allowed for ministerial associations with which bishops would consult. Baxter and those of his party also had no objection in principle to a liturgy or set form of prayer.” See (*Shapers of English Calvinism 1660-1714: Variety, Persistence, and Transformation* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2011], 22). This description of Baxter could easily be used to describe Wesley later in life.

1760s. By the end of his life, Wesley had structured the conference to become a legal body with full control of the connexion that he had created. During his lifetime, Wesley may have run his conferences with an iron fist, and used his personality and status as father of the movement to contain the lay preachers, but they should not be seen as passive agents of the Wesley brothers. These preachers displayed an independent streak that only gained traction as the Wesley brothers continued to age and the Wesleyan Methodist movement attained a distinct ethos from that of the larger Revival and the Church of England.

In terms of John Wesley's relationship to his Evangelical colleagues, these increasingly independent lay preachers introduce to it a new level of complexity. As Wesley's helpers, these lay preachers were in a certain sense an extension of Wesley himself. Wesley created a system much like the system of the early church where a bishop would ordain others to represent him within a community where he could not always be present. He sent them out on circuits that he approved. Wesley acted as though he was an episcopal agent, and the preachers soon began to act as though he had ordained them to clerical orders. If there was confusion about ecclesiastical status on the part of the Methodist preachers, it was not entirely their fault. In a letter to Robert Marsden written in the summer of 1756, Wesley argued that the lay preachers were not "*ministers*" because "none of them undertakes *single* the care of an whole flock, but ten, twenty, or thirty, one following and helping another."³⁴⁹ This argument, however, based on numbers and movement, did not address the concerns of parish priests nor did it address the actual status of the lay preachers.

³⁴⁹ To Robert Marsden, August 31, 1756. In the same letter, Wesley also indicated that the preachers only needed knowledge of Scripture and not a further education to do the work of the itinerancy. This is in stark contrast to his intentions for publishing the Christian Library.

In keeping with the fluidity of the Revival and its ever-changing dynamics, Wesley appears to have left the status and location of his preachers in a continual state of flux. When later in the Revival he added a small, but noticeable, number of women to assist him arguing for the “exceptional” nature of the movement, Wesley simply added another layer of complexity to the situation and faced opposition from the Church and his “sons.”³⁵⁰

Within the structures of the Church of England these Methodist preachers were lay persons. They had no ecclesiastical standing. Yet their influence within the culture was much greater than their status or title. Not only with Wesley’s imprimatur, but with the rise of populist forms of religion in the English-speaking world exemplified in the Revival itself, these lay preachers could attract a following regardless of their status, profession, or education. Bebbington writes:

These were not scholar-preachers or gentlemen-parsons, agents of a religious monopoly addressing a parish congregation of the Established Church, supported by law and custom. Rather, these were popular preachers who openly competed for the willing attention of individuals in public spaces, preaching in the market or on the common or from the court house steps. And they did so just at the time when changing patterns of consumption introduced a new level of choice into Anglo-American society.”³⁵¹

These preachers had the admiration of the Methodist people, and the capitalist structures outlined in Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* were at work in the religious marketplace to create a context in which

³⁵⁰ See Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 138, and, Paul Wesley Chilcote, *John Wesley and the Women Preachers of Early Methodism* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1991). This chapter deals with issues around the use of lay preachers in general and their impact on Evangelical relations, but Wesley’s sporadic use of female preachers adds an additional layer of complexity to the overall situation of Wesleyan Methodism’s place within the Church of England, and would create heated debate in the next century as Methodism moved from movement to church.

³⁵¹ Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*.

they could thrive apart from ecclesiastical approval.³⁵² Thus a popular lay preacher could challenge the authority of the most austere clergyman in the very confines of his own parish, and do so in the name of Wesley. Ever the witty critic, Mortimer wrote:

Strange effect of credulity in a Christian country, and under the eye of the best disciplined church on earth, that a man should be deemed an inspired preacher, and followed from one end of the town to the other, that cannot speak good English, and does not understand the first rudiments of his native tongue!³⁵³

Unlike the eloquent Dinah Morris of George Elliot's *Adam Bede*, the Wesleys' assistants were not known for their rhetorical skills, but for their ability to persuade the masses. The university-trained clergy of the Church, including her Evangelical incumbents, were a sharp contrast to these artisan preachers.

A parish system had been set up in England for the spiritual benefit of the people of England by her Established Church. Field preaching was the arena of rabble-rousers and enthusiasts. And yet here the Oxford don after being expelled from pulpit after pulpit was found preaching to anyone within earshot. What complicates the relationship of Wesley to the Evangelicals is his remedy for a dearth of clergy willing to follow his footsteps. He insisted that he must send his lay preachers into every parish in England, including those overseen by Evangelical incumbents. This lack of trust, as the Evangelicals saw it, created tension between the two parties that eventually came to a head at the 1764 Conference. Ultimately, these lay extensions of a maverick Wesley proved to further erode Wesley's connection to the parish ministry of the

³⁵² Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 43-46.

³⁵³ T. Mortimer, *Die and Be Damned*, 35.

Church. Ironically, both parties were attempting to secure a future for evangelicalism. The Evangelicals aimed to make room for an evangelical witness within the Church; Wesley wanted an evangelical witness in England whether in the Church or outside of it.

Geography and a Maturing Movement within the Church

David Bebbington has convincingly argued that evangelicals in all their various stripes found themselves competing with one another upon the same soil, in the same geography, because they attracted similar occupations and classes within English society.³⁵⁴ Wesley's preachers found their greatest success in areas where the Evangelical clergy had found theirs. An "evangelical belt" existed sporadically from Yorkshire to Cornwall, creating an arc on the outskirts of the Church's most concentrated area of parishes in the southeast. The London-Bristol axis so often highlighted in the early rise of Wesley's Methodism does not represent the mass of Wesleyan Methodism beyond its earliest years. The strength of the movement was to be found in this sweeping arc where the Industrial Revolution was changing the social fabric of rural England and thin parish coverage made it near impossible to keep an eye on every corner of expansive parishes. Evangelical Anglicanism saw its greatest strength in these same areas.

Yorkshire and Cornwall were the strongholds of Evangelicalism in the eighteenth century. The Revival seems to have "struck deepest root," according to Bebbington and Hempton, in areas of the country populated heavily by artisans and small farmers.³⁵⁵ Bebbington writes "therefore,

³⁵⁴ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 26.

areas springing into life with proto-industrial employment for the skilled worker, townships like Paddiford Common in ‘Janet’s Repentance’ with weaving and mining as the chief occupations, were ideal territory. Methodism and Calvinistic Dissent as well as the Evangelical Anglicanism that George Eliot depicts thrived there.”³⁵⁶

What this shared geography created was direct competition between already marginalized groups. Given Wesley’s insistence that his intention was never to be in competition with the Established Church, but rather to enliven it, these areas of geographical overlap created opportunities and opposition. In Haworth, Grimshaw was open to Wesley’s preachers and a Methodist circuit was established.³⁵⁷ In Madeley, Fletcher was supportive but had to moderate his connections to Methodism for political reasons. In Venn’s parish of Huddlesfield, Venn asked Wesley personally not to appoint his preachers.³⁵⁸ The majority of the Evangelicals were more in-line with Venn than they were with either Grimshaw or Fletcher.

What complicated this overlap was the parish system itself. Those parish ministers appointed to a parish were legally charged to care for the souls of the persons within their parish boundaries. This system, sponsored by the State and upheld by the Crown, the archbishops,

³⁵⁵ For small farmers, the social, geographical, and economic disruption caused during this period as large swaths of land were being taken out of common use to create large farms owned by the wealthy must be kept in mind. This social shift created a context of flux similar to the religious flux of the Revival itself.

³⁵⁶ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 26.

³⁵⁷ It appears that as early as 1753, there was a society visited by Wesley’s preachers in Haworth that was producing lay preachers for the Methodist Conference. “John Greenwood” is listed as a preacher in the 1753 Conference minutes. Rack indicates that he was earlier listed in the Todmoreden Society Accounts of 1750-52, a society in Haworth. See *Works* 10:260.

³⁵⁸ It is likely that Venn discussed the issue of Methodist preachers in his parish with Wesley on March 25, 1761 when they “breakfasted.” See *Works* 21:313. See also 21:336, fn. 96.

bishops, and clergy of the Church, was the appointed means by which the spiritual health of the nation was to be maintained. Roving pseudo-clergy did not fit within the official geography of English ecclesiastical life. These lay preachers presented a challenge to the system, not simply as competition, but as a challenge to the established order. The parish priests were not interested in participating on a neutral playing-field, nor did they have to. And their primary concern was the parish under their legal charge. Evangelical clergyman John Milner, writing to Wesley in 1750, indicated his strong attachment to Wesley on a personal level and praises his writings, but indicates kindly in his letter that his primary duty is the care of his parish.³⁵⁹ Walsh has written that “for many clergymen of the decentralised Church of England the parish was their world” and contrasts this parish-centered perspective with Wesley’s bold pronouncement that “I look upon all the world as my parish”³⁶⁰

The evangelical impulse was not always strong enough to overcome the clerical attachment to localized parishes. Wesley was convinced that there were not enough clergy in England who

³⁵⁹ *Works*, 26:397. Another letter dated the following year indicates that Milner itinerated with Wesley “into the north” and was reproved by the Bishop of Chester, Samuel Peploe. See *Works*, 26:467.

³⁶⁰ Walsh, “John Wesley 1703-1791,” 5. Walsh argues that later biographers of Wesley had to look to the Roman Catholic tradition to find appropriate parallels. “By the time of Wesley’s death, when his system had evolved in its fullness, his memorialists were driven to the Roman Church to find informative parallels for Wesley and his movement. Macaulay later embroidered this theme in a brilliant passage of his essay on Ranke’s Popes. Rome, he suggested, would have known just what to do with the early Methodists. It would have made rapid use of Wesley’s plebeian preachers. ‘The ignorant enthusiast of whom the Anglican Church makes an enemy . . . the Catholic Church makes a champion. She bids him nurse his beard, covers him with a gown and hood of coarse dark stuff, ties a rope around his waist and sends him forth to teach in her name. He costs her nothing.’ So too of the genteel leaders of Methodism: Macaulay suggested that ‘at Rome, the Countess of Huntingdon would have a place in the calendar as St Selina . . . Place Ignatius Loyola at Oxford. He is certain to become the head of a formidable secession. Place John Wesley at Rome. He is certain to be the first General of a new Society devoted to the interests and honour of the Church.’” 4. See Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The Complete Works of Lord Macaulay, in Twelve Volumes* (New York: P. G. Putnam’s Sons, 1898), 9:320.

proclaimed an evangelical gospel and chose to relieve this lack of clerical participation with inspired laymen. Comparing Wesley's efforts to the monastic renewal efforts of Medieval Europe, Walsh claims:

Wesley had formed what was in part a new preaching order—like that of the Friars—and in part a lay devotional confraternity. His itinerant preaching force embraced that principle of mobility which the Roman Church welcomed, but which the Hanoverian Establishment as yet refused to entertain.”³⁶¹

Evangelical clergy also felt this dearth of an evangelical clerical witness. In Cornwall, Wesley encountered a number of Evangelicals willing to itinerate throughout the area to fill the need for evangelical preaching. These Evangelicals, however, would never become like Wesley's new preaching order.

In the isolated southwest corner of England, Cornwall was a stronghold of evangelicalism in much of its various forms during the eighteenth century and beyond. Wesley's relationship to Evangelicals in Cornwall in the 1740s is a picture of cooperation. In his *Journal*, Wesley recounts numerous invitations to Evangelical parish churches. He also indicates that Evangelicals in Cornwall, for the most part, encouraged his itinerating practices and joined with him. Three Evangelical clergy are known to have itinerated during the early part of the 1740s in Cornwall: John Bennet,³⁶² John Meriton,³⁶³ and George Thomson.³⁶⁴ All three of these clergy itinerated with

³⁶¹ Walsh, “John Wesley 1703-1791,” 5.

³⁶² Rev. John Bennet (c. 1670–1750), admitted at Queen's College, Cambridge, Sept. 7, 1693; B.A., 1697; M.A., 1726. Apparently a contemporary and acquaintance of the elder Samuel Wesley; see Charles Wesley's *Manuscript Journal*, July 13, 1744, 2:408. Perpetual curate of North Tamerton, 1705; curate of Tresmeer (where he resided), 1720; curate of Laneast, 1731. “Not merely a pluralist but a hunting parson, Bennet was converted in 1742” Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 34–45.

Wesley in the early part of the decade. Thomson even joined Wesley in an attempt to save one of the lay preachers from being shipped out for naval service.³⁶⁵

In Wesley's April 1744 journal account he records visiting Bennet and being invited to preach in his church. Wesley's reputation had apparently preceded his visit and he was expected to preach at the Laneast Church when he arrived. He wrote in his *Journal*:

In the afternoon we came again to Trewint. Here I learned that notice had been given of my preaching that evening in Laneast Church, which was crowded exceedingly. Mr. Bennet (the minister of Laneast) carried me afterwards to his house and (though above seventy years old) came with me in the morning to Trewint, where I had promised to preach at five.³⁶⁶

Wesley was warmly welcomed in Cornwall by Evangelicals who in the early part of the 1740s held theological views similar to his own, and whose irregularities matched those which were making him famous. They also experienced persecution for their irregularity.

By 1757, Bishop Lavington, then Bishop of Exeter, officially reproved Evangelical clergy for itinerating outside the bounds of their parishes. Yet well before this episcopal injunction, John Wesley sent lay preachers into Cornwall to create a Wesleyan structure among the Evangelical

³⁶³ See Charles Wesley, *Manuscript Journal*, July 3, 1743, 2:356, and Charles Wesley's, *Funeral Hymns* (1759), 28-29. Meriton died in 1753.

³⁶⁴ It was in 1745 through George Whitefield that John Wesley met George Thomson (1698/99-1782). Thomson, sometimes spelled Thompson, was born in 1689 and was the rector of St. Genny's, Cornwall. He invited Wesley to preach at his church in June of 1745. Wesley records in his journal, "We left Bristol early on Friday 14, and on Sunday morning reached St. Gennys. The church was moderately filled with serious hearers, but few of them appeared to feel what they heard. I preached both morning and afternoon, and on Monday evening. And many assented to and approved of the truth." See June 14, 1745, *Works*: 20:69.

³⁶⁵ They were not successful. John Downes was shipped out in order to remove him from the area. Local magistrates found this unique way to rid themselves of his influence by conscripting him for idleness. See May 11, 1744, in *Works* 20:28 and fn. 46. See also Weber, *Politics in the Order of Salvation*, 432, fn. 24.

³⁶⁶ Wesley, April 25, 1744, *Works* 20:25.

parishes that occupied much of Cornwall. If there were three itinerating clergymen traversing Cornwall in the early 1740s, it is not clear why Wesley still thought it necessary to send lay preachers. His reason for calling laymen to preach in the first place was a lack of clergy willing to take part in the Revival.

Of the three Evangelical clergy who itinerated with Wesley, only Thomson lived well beyond Bishop Lavington's censure of the itinerating Cornish Evangelicals in 1747. Thomson and Wesley, however, appear to have ceased communicating in the 1750s. Thomson not only received episcopal censure for his irregularities, but was caught up by association with Wesley in concerns over Jacobitism and a sexual scandal involving a tavern maid who accused Wesley of improprieties. It is not clear exactly why the two men lose contact with one another, but it is evident that Thomson paid dearly for his association with Wesley. According to H. Miles Brown "the vicar of Marham-Church complained in 1744 to the bishop about Thomson's 'circumforaneous vociferations,' and the worthy itinerant was admonished to confine his preaching henceforth to his own parish."³⁶⁷ What is clear is that by the end of the 1750s there was no clerical cooperation with Wesleyan Methodist lay preachers or societies in Cornwall. The focus for those who remained loyal to the Church and the evangelical message in this stronghold of the movement was to find a way to keep the evangelical message alive within the Church and within its structures.

Bennet and Meriton were of an older generation than that of the leading figures of the Evangelical Revival that began in earnest in the late 1730s. Both clergymen had died by 1753. They were of the generation of George Conon, the influential headmaster of the Truro Grammar

³⁶⁷ H. Miles Brown, *The Church in Cornwall* (Truro: Oscar Blackford, 1964), 68.

School, who was instrumental in the conversion of Samuel Walker. Walker would become archetypical of the later Evangelicals, although he died in mid-life in 1761. The next generation, the generation who had experienced the episcopal backlash of the 1740s and the scandals surrounding itinerancy, lay preaching, and supposed schism in the 1750s, were more conservative in their practices than were their predecessors. George Whitefield, never the moderate, was actually an example of what can be called a maturing of the Revival in this period.

Whitefield published over 600 pages of autobiographical narrative by his early 20s and later regretted aspects of it, including comments on persons and portions that smacked of enthusiasm. By 1756 he reprinted an edited and abridged edition of these works. Hindmarsh notes:

He finally made good on all this contrition in 1756, at 41 years of age, when he republished his whole autobiographical corpus (the two-part autobiography and the Journals) in a corrected and abridged version. Many passages that were “justly exceptionable” were silently omitted. By comparing the originals with the 1756 edition, we can thus see two narrative identities for Whitefield: an ebullient and obstreperous young evangelist in the late 1730s and early 1740s, and a chastened and experienced evangelical minister in 1756.³⁶⁸

This revisionism reflects the maturing that took place in the 1750s as Evangelical clergymen began to assert their place in the Church and differentiate their work from the roving evangelists, both Anglican and dissenting. Whitefield’s maturation and the maturation of the Evangelical clergy correspond. The 1755 conference of the Wesleyan Methodists was dominated by the clash of these two evangelical forces within the Wesleyan fold: one settling into the rhythms of ecclesiastical structures and the other intent on the use of irregular methods. The continued clash as evidenced

³⁶⁸ Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 109.

throughout the 1750s and 60s simply reinforced the differing trajectories of these two branches of the Revival. What it did not indicate, however, was a shift in geography. The same evangelical branches were still to be found in the same “evangelical belt” as before. Yet in fewer cases would Wesley find clergy willing to itinerate with him, and even fewer Evangelicals who were open to the idea of unlicensed laymen let loose to preach within their parish boundaries.

Evangelical Attempts to Curtail the Preachers

One of the principal casualties of this continuing maturation of the Evangelical Revival within the Church was the participation of regular clergymen in the activities of the Wesley brothers.³⁶⁹ The number of regular clergy associated with Methodism was never high, yet it became increasingly difficult to associate with Wesleyan Methodism as Wesley continued to look for a replacement for these clerical colleagues in the ranks of his “awakened” followers. Including the Wesley brothers themselves, only six clergy were present at the first conference.³⁷⁰ The highest number of clergy at conference during Wesley’s lifetime was twelve, and they attended in 1764 over concerns about lay preachers in Evangelical parishes.³⁷¹ The so-called solution to a lack of clerical assistance created a context in which clerical assistance became even less likely. The difficulties created by Wesley’s use of the lay preachers as an alternative to clergy occupied Thomas

³⁶⁹ Even Charles Wesley began to itinerate less and less as he entered married life and he and his wife began to have children.

³⁷⁰ *Works*, 10:123-124.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 10:298.

Adam, Samuel Walker, Charles Wesley, and John Fletcher from the 1750s until their deaths. All of them saw the continued use of the lay preachers as a stumbling block to future relations with the Church.

Wesley did not give up his vision for a cooperative evangelical effort until late in the 1760s. Baker wrote that Wesley dreamed of “a national union of evangelical clergy who might keep in touch with each other by correspondence and occasional itinerancy, and who could both serve Methodism and be served by it in ensuring a continuing evangelical witness within the Established Church.”³⁷² Such a system would have intertwined the Evangelicals under their bishops with the Wesleyan conference under Wesley. Baker believed that this plan was first adumbrated at the 1757 conference. In a letter to Samuel Walker outlining that year’s conference, Wesley wrote:

I proposed that question to all who met at our late Conference, “What can be done in order to a closer union with the clergy who preach the truth?” We all agreed that nothing could be more desirable. I in particular have long desired it: not from any view to my own ease or honour or temporal convenience in any kind, but because I was deeply convinced it might be a blessing to my own soul and a means of promoting the general work of God.³⁷³

Baker provides a detached comment, simply stating: “This project Wesley discussed with others of the Cornish clergy, but apparently with little success.”³⁷⁴

At the heart of Evangelical efforts to work with Wesley on relations with the Church of England were attempts either to settle the preachers or to have them go through the process of ordination within the Church. Some proposals, such as Fletcher and Benson’s proposal in the

³⁷² Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 183.

³⁷³ *Letters* (Telford) 3:224 (Wesley to Samuel Walker, 19 September 1757).

³⁷⁴ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 184.

1770s, would have created a “Methodist Church of England” much like the English Huguenot structure under Anglican episcopal oversight that Fletcher knew himself.³⁷⁵ Obviously, Wesley did not agree to any of these proposals, nor is it clear that episcopal leaders would have been open to these proposals either. William Law had told Charles Wesley in the 1740s that he had hoped the lay preachers of Wesleyan Methodism would have entered holy orders. Charles noted in his journal that Law “had had great hopes that the Methodists would have been dispersed by little and little into livings, and have leavened the whole lump.” He was entirely against laymen serving as preachers “as the very worst thing, both for themselves and others.”³⁷⁶

Pressure was mounting, however, from Evangelicals close to Wesley and from bishops of the Church who saw these itinerating lay preachers as dangerous. In a letter to his brother Charles, John wrote from London in summer 1755: “The good Bishop of London has excommunicated Mr. Gardiner for preaching without a license. It is probable the point will now speedily be determined concerning the Church: for if we must either *dissent or be silent, actum est*. [[Adieu.]] We have no time to trifle!”³⁷⁷ This letter indicated the seriousness with which Wesley felt compelled to mitigate the legal structures of the Church in order to promote his evangelical message. His “*actum est*” or “it is all over” to the Church seems a radical departure for the Tory Wesley, but indicates the extent to which he would protect the structures that he had created to promote the Revival.

³⁷⁵ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 288. Heitzenrater compares the Fletcher-Benson plan to what Wesley ultimately carried out with the ordinations of 1784.

³⁷⁶ Charles Wesley, *Manuscript Journal*, 1:184.

³⁷⁷ *Works* 26:563 (to the Revd. Charles Wesley, June 23, 1755). In the Bicentennial Edition of the Works, text written in the Wesley brothers’ shorthand is bracketed with two brackets.

Telford, with all the prejudice of nineteenth-century Methodism, wrote that this letter was “one of the most momentous of Wesley’s letters.” He argued that Wesley “could not consent to give up his lay preachers, who had been so greatly blessed; and he clearly saw that to do so would be an end to the Evangelical Revival. He was awake to the situation, deeply anxious to do nothing inconsistent with his position as a clergyman, yet utterly unable to take any step that would destroy his work.”³⁷⁸ It is not hard to imagine that Wesley felt much as Telford describes. Wesley’s connection to his lay preachers at times even in the 1750s seems to have been stronger than his connection to the Church. Wesley’s response to the bishop’s verdict indicates the growing divergence between the brothers on the issue of lay preachers. As early as 1752, Charles, in a letter to Lady Huntingdon wrote that: “Unless a sudden remedy be found, the preachers will destroy the work of God.”³⁷⁹ While John was ever ready to defend the preachers, Charles was as eager to jettison them if they threatened to divide the Revival from the Church.

In addition to his brother Charles, Wesley consulted Walker of Truro on the situation. The correspondence of Wesley and Walker during this period can in some ways be seen as encompassing nearly every issue that stood between Wesley and a continued connection to those Evangelicals within the Church.³⁸⁰ The correspondence, which covers 1755-1761, was not simply between Walker and Wesley, but included additional insights from both Charles Wesley and

³⁷⁸ *Letters* (Telford), 3:143 (September 24, 1755).

³⁷⁹ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 160 (Charles Wesley to Lady Huntingdon, August 4, 1752).

³⁸⁰ *Works*, 26:583 (Wesley to Samuel Walker, Sept. 5, 1755).

Thomas Adam.³⁸¹ Charles, however, appears to have been the pivotal player. It was his working relationship with both Walker and his brother that kept the parties in conversation. Without Charles's input, the words of Walker would have fallen on the deaf ears of his increasingly independent-minded brother.

Charles was essential to the maintenance of Evangelical communication during the crises of the 1750s, but continued vehemently to push his brother with increasing severity to declare once and for all his allegiance to the Church. Baker notes that, "it seems likely that C[harles] W[esley] pressed his brother to sign a declaration binding himself and the societies never to separate from the Church of England."³⁸² John was not willing to sign any such document. His response to Charles's increasing pressure was to write his brother in the summer of 1755: "I do not myself, and dare not give *that* under my hand, to you or any man living. And I should count anyone either a fool or a knave that would give it under his hand to *me*."³⁸³ His parting shot at his brother was to tell him that his "gross bigotry lies here, in putting a man on a level with an adulterer because he differs from you as to church government."³⁸⁴ Charles was becoming the voice of regular Evangelical Anglicanism within the confines of Wesleyan Methodism.

³⁸¹ Adam was by far the most conservative voice in this quadrangle of Evangelicals. Davies notes that Adam "could not approve of the ordination of lay preachers, or of those not ordained being retained as inspectors of societies, which were themselves irregular, as setting up 'a Church within a Church'. He felt on the whole that they had embarrassed themselves past recovery; and that it would be wiser for them to separate completely and openly" (*The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 119).

³⁸² *Works* 26:572, fn. 15.

³⁸³ *Works* 26:572 (John Wesley to Charles Wesley, July 16, 1755).

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 573.

Walker's first impression of "your present very critical circumstances" was that the debate over opinions would not give the Methodists any lasting security in any of their deliberation. Leaving the Church was never an option for Walker and he encouraged Wesley not to even publish his *Ought We to Separate* (1758) for fear that it would cause dissention among the Methodists, encourage their opponents, and make "friends who are not Methodists to fear."³⁸⁵ Walker insisted that the Methodists had created within their own ranks a context separate from the Church where their discussion of separation had become unintelligible. He encouraged Wesley to come back to the fold.

In characteristic evangelical fashion, Walker challenges Wesley to look to the scriptures for the answer to whether it was "lawful" for the Methodists to separate from the Church. He is deferential toward Wesley and kind, but he laid out for the Oxford logician a very consistent formula whereby Wesley would have to prove from scripture an apparent need to separate from the Church. Implied in Walker's formula is the scriptural concept of the unity of the faithful. Walker writes, "I know you will search the Scriptures, which no doubt are clear enough to determine any meek inquirer whether it be lawful for him or not to abide in the communion of that Church to which he belongs."³⁸⁶ From this vantage point, Walker addresses the issue of lay preachers.

Walker's understanding of lay preachers is summarized in his statement that:

³⁸⁵ *Works*, 26:583 (Sept. 5, 1755). Walker was a Churchman throughout his life. He was instrumental in keeping William Romaine within the Church of England in 1759. See Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 177.

³⁸⁶ *Works*, 26:583.

If the laws of the Church of England admit not such preachers, then herein is a step made in separation and that whatever necessity there may be of them. Put this together, and may you not have cause to think *that either you will not be able to stop a separation, or must somehow or other stop these preachers?* As long as they remain there is a beginning of separation; and that also which will keep the people in mind of it.³⁸⁷

Walker was certain that the very structure of Wesley's Methodism was itself a form of separation.

The Church already had a structure, and in Walker's view that structure was the essence of the Church of England. He wrote in the same letter that the "permission or appointment" of the preachers was "a form of separation from the Church of England, the essence of which, considered as such, consists in her orders and laws rather than in her doctrines and worship, which constitutes her a Church of Christ."³⁸⁸

Walker was not the only Evangelical to take this view. In Yorkshire, that other stronghold of evangelicalism in the eighteenth century, Henry Cooke in a sermon preached that same year wrote in similar fashion:

If the *Constitution* of our *Church* answers to the Scriptures (and I am thoroughly satisfied it does) then doubtless, the *Constitution*, not the *mere Mode or Manner* of Worship, is the good unchangeable *Way*; and, whatever Doctrine is contrary to it, is no better than *Novelty*, and *Innovation*, be the Person who he will, that maintains it.³⁸⁹

Cooke was quick to add, "he who does (whether *Priest* or *Layman*) is himself (in *Fact*) a *Separatist* from the *Church* in *Sentiments*, not withstanding his *loud* and *pretended* Friendship for her." Cooke's

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 584. Baker described this differentiation simply in that Walker was arguing that doctrine belongs to all Christians, polity to the Church of England. See *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 170.

³⁸⁹ Henry Crooke, *The Church of England a pure and true church: attempted in a sermon, preached at the parish church of Leeds, in Yorkshire, on Wednesday the 12th day of March, being the 5th Wednesday in Lent*. (London: 1755), 8.

sermon was aimed at those who may have actually been, according to his standards, “Separatists in *Mask*.”³⁹⁰

Here, then, the issues between Wesley and Walker and the other Evangelicals of similar mind were laid bare. Wesley never accepted the idea that the essence of the Church was in her “forms,” but rather he believed that the essence of the Church was found in its faithful proclamation of the Christian gospel. Thus while the Evangelicals wanted to maintain the Wesleyan message within the Church understood by her hierarchy and structure, Wesley saw all practical impediments to the spread of the gospel as a hindrance to the faith, and thus of the Church. Only with the continued evolution of the Revival would Wesley act upon his ideals, but they were evident from the 1750s onward and would continue to create a fissure between him and the Evangelicals within the Church.

Wesley was able both to maintain an irregular ministry and to insist that he was a faithful member of the Church of England precisely because of his insistence that the essence of the Church of England was to be found in her teachings and not in her practices. Such a bifurcation of the English Church made it possible for him to see his proclamation of an Anglican gospel as participation in the English Church, structures and all. This bifurcation also made room for Wesley’s arguments outlined in his so-called Korah sermon, now known as “Prophets and Priests.” Wesley, in good Anglican fashion, argued in this later sermon for a distinct differentiation between prophets sent to preach the word of God, and priests authorized to administer the Sacraments. This functional reading provided Wesley with a lens through which to justify his

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

sending of prophets (i.e. lay preachers) to preach to the masses, while dodging the question of sacramental authority, validity, and ordination.³⁹¹ For Walker, Adam, and Crooke, this analysis of English Church life did not hold up to scrutiny. They were convinced that to be within the Church of England, one must abide by its practices and its form of governance. Neither does it appear from their sermons or from Adam's popular catechism that they would have denied the importance of Anglican teachings, but would have insisted that such standards of the Church, such as the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Book of Homilies, and the Book of Common Prayer, were to be understood and used within the community that had created and maintained them.³⁹² Wesley was preaching an Anglican gospel, but not within what could reasonably be called the Church of England.

Wesley's second letter to Walker outlined exactly the objections of the lay preachers and other members of the Wesleyan Conference.³⁹³ The objections were not new to English Church life; precedents for them can be seen for over a century before, mostly in dissenting circles. Members of the conference objected to the confusion caused by Calvinism, but they also objected

³⁹¹ See "Prophets and Priests," John Wesley, *Sermons* IV (115-151), Volume 4 in the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980). Also, Ward, *Faith and Faction*, 225-248, for a description of the legacy Wesley left to Methodists. This legacy included various battles that would erupt in the nineteenth century as Methodism moved from movement to church.

³⁹² See Thomas Adam, *Practical lectures on the church-catechism. By Thomas Adam, ... The fifth edition. To which is now added, An exercise, by way of question and answer, preparatory to confirmation* (London: 1767); and Samuel Walker, *Fifty-Two Sermons on The Baptismal Covenant, The Creed, The Ten Commandments, and other Important Subjects of Practical Religion . . . New Edition* (London: 1810).

³⁹³ Baker believed that Wesley was seeking support for the ordination of the lay preachers in this second letter, although implicitly. Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 171.

to the strictures of the Prayer Book and laws of the Church “if they include the Canons and Decretals” which were thought to be “the very dregs of Popery.”³⁹⁴

The third and fourth reasons that Wesley supplied claimed that the majority of the English clergy had not been called of God to their work and that they did not preach the faith. To these Walker’s response was to see “at the bottom of this a factious unsubmissive spirit” evident specifically “in their third and fourth reasons for a separation.”³⁹⁵ Walker argued that these arguments “would never have got into their heads, [had] not a conceit of themselves, and an ambition of being ministers, first got into their hearts.”³⁹⁶ Edwin Sidney, Walker’s early biographer wrote that Walker sent a copy of this letter to Adam with the comment, “Will he be able to stand his ground? For my part I think not. I fear he hath too high an opinion of Methodism, and imagines it will be lost if the preachers leave him, which I am fully confirmed they will do, if he will not go with them.”³⁹⁷

Walker outlined much of the same argument for Charles Wesley. In a letter from 1756, he wrote that lay preachers were “contrary to the constitution of the Church of England” and therefore signified separation from it. For Walker, the maintenance of lay preachers by the Wesleys was detrimental whether they were needed or not. The practice was “plainly inconsistent with the

³⁹⁴ *Works* 26:582 (Wesley to Samuel Walker, Sept. 24, 1755).

³⁹⁵ Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 101, and *Works* 26:606-608 (Samuel Walker to John Wesley, Oct. 20, 1755).

³⁹⁶ Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 101.

³⁹⁷ Quoted in Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 102. Edwin Sidney, *The Life and Ministry of the Rev. Samuel Walker, B.A. formerly of Truro, Cornwall* (London: 1838), 182.

discipline of the Church of England; and so in one essential point setting up a church within her, which cannot be of her.”³⁹⁸ Walker’s willingness to be frank with Charles is evident in this letter. While Walker was a friend of Methodism, he was not in favor of its effects on the long-term relationship of Methodism to the Church and its Evangelical clergy. Walker had the ability to see plainly the consequences of Wesleyan Methodism’s maverick practices. He wrote to Charles that the use of lay preachers would put Methodist and Evangelical cooperation at a stand-still. These roving lay evangelists must either be settled or become a part of the regular clergy of the Church.

Meantime, there is a continual bar kept up between you and any regular clergyman, who cannot in conscience fall in with this measure. The most he can do is not to forbid them. He cannot take them by the hand. And so there must be two disunited ministrations of the word in the same place, by people who yet do call themselves of the Church of England. You cannot but observe there shall never be a nearer connection between the most zealous clergy of the Church of England and the Methodists than now subsists, until this block be taken out of the way.³⁹⁹

The Huddersfield Compromise and the Conference of 1764

While most Evangelical clergy either ignored the Wesleyan Methodists or encouraged Wesley to regularize the movement within the structures of the Church, Henry Venn of Huddersfield, a close friend of the Wesleys, sought a unique compromise with his irregular associates. Venn was not the first Evangelical to approach Wesley with the idea of placing Methodist societies under the control of local Evangelical incumbents. Samuel Walker was surprised by Wesley when Wesley refused to place the local Methodist society under the care of

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 111.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

Evangelical James Vowler in Cornwall. Walker wrote to Adam in 1758, a letter describing the work that Vowler was accomplishing as curate at St. Agnes. He wrote that “Christ rides prosperously at St. Agnes” and indicated that “Brother Vowler” had organized societies “who meet among themselves in little parties weekly for free conversation.” All this was in spite of the “strange opposition made against him by the Methodists.” Walker was convinced—after Wesley’s refusals to turn over the Methodist societies in Evangelical parishes, and he and Wesley’s correspondence—that in the eyes of the Methodists both he and Vowler were “well-meaning legalists.”⁴⁰⁰

The Huddersfield Compromise, which somewhat severed the society in Huddersfield from the Connexion in favor of Venn’s oversight, only lasted a few years and may or may not have worked as either Wesley or Venn had intended. But it opened up the possibility of Evangelical parishes free from the wandering itinerants of Wesley’s Methodism. The situation surrounding the deliberations revealed the relational nature of the Evangelical Revival. Not only were Wesley and Venn friends, and the Methodists in Huddersfield fond of Venn, but the Huddersfield Compromise revealed the connectedness that local Methodists felt for Wesley himself and the connections represented by his lay itinerants.

Venn went to the parish of Huddersfield to St. Peter’s Church in the evangelical stronghold of Yorkshire in 1759, having served as a curate in the future Evangelical stronghold of Clapham just north of London. Venn’s son and biographer called Huddersfield “the grand scene” of his father’s work in the Church.⁴⁰¹ The Methodists had already founded a society in the parish

⁴⁰⁰ Sidney, *The Life and Ministry of the Rev. Samuel Walker*, 436 (dated June 7, 1758).

by the time that Venn had arrived and the situation created by this confluence of Evangelicalism and Methodism, according to Baker, caused Wesley a bit of embarrassment. He could not claim, as he had in the case of Vowler, that he was unsure of Venn's pastoral experience.⁴⁰² The entire compromise was built on the basis of long-time friendship and camaraderie.

Venn's curate, the Evangelical George Burnett who had also come to Huddersfield in 1759, had been warned by Walker that same year of a Methodist society in the parish. Walker wrote a letter to Adam describing Burnett's work in Huddersfield and wrote that the parish included "an old society of John Wesley's." His advice was that "it will be a nice matter neither to quarrel nor join with them," adding that the Methodists "are in our parts hot, and must be treated with much forbearance."⁴⁰³ Burnett, with closer connections to the regular ministries of the Revival, does not figure in descriptions of Wesley's compromise with Venn.

Two years into Venn's incumbency at Huddersfield a compromise was reached. Wesley wrote in his *Journal*: "I came to a full explanation with that good man, Mr. V[enn]. Lord, if I *must* dispute, let it be with the children of the devil. Let me be at peace with *thy* children!"⁴⁰⁴ He had brokered a compromise with Venn, the 1761 Conference, and the local society in the parish.

Explaining the situation later, Wesley wrote:

⁴⁰¹ *Letters of Henry Venn*, 26.

⁴⁰² See Walker to Adam, June 7, 1758 in Sidney, *Life and Ministry of the Rev. Samuel Walker*, 436. For more on Vowler, see John Gillies, *Historical Collections Relating to Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel* (Kelso: John Rutherford, 1845), 532. Wesley mentions Vowler twice in his journal. On September 3, 1757 he wrote that Vowler "both preaches and lives the gospel." See *Works* 21:122. See also September 17, 1762, 21:389 for a very similar remark.

⁴⁰³ Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 183 (Samuel Walker to Thomas Adam, Oct. 22, 1759).

⁴⁰⁴ *Works* 21:336 (July 20, 1761).

Several years before [Venn] came to Huddersfield some of our preachers went thither, carrying their lives in their hands, and with great difficulty established a little earnest Society. These eagerly desire them to preach there still; not in opposition to Mr. Venn (whom they love, esteem, and constantly attend), but to supply what they do not find in his preaching. It is a tender point. Where there is a gospel ministry already, we do not desire to preach; but whether we can leave off preaching because such an one comes after, is another question, especially when those who are awakened and convinced by us beg and require the continuance of our assistance.' The immediate outcome of the present discussion was satisfactory: 'We have amicably compromised the affair of preaching. He is well pleased that the preachers should come once a month.'⁴⁰⁵

While the focus of this work is the political situation caused by evangelical competition, the concerns of the participants centered on the spiritual welfare of those under their care. And, given the voluntary nature of the societies, both Venn and Wesley had to gain the support of the local Methodists themselves.

Within a year, Wesley had withdrawn his preachers from Huddersfield altogether.⁴⁰⁶ Venn built chapels in the parish to continue the Evangelical work. It is not clear whether these chapels should be categorized as "Methodist preaching-houses free of Anglican control" as Baker described them, or as "non-episcopal chapels" as Telford described them.⁴⁰⁷

The situation surrounding the Huddersfield Compromise was one of cooperation between friends, but also including the continuing rise of Evangelical concern for the maintenance and

⁴⁰⁵ *Letters* (Telford) 4:160, Wesley to Ebenezer Blackwell, July 16, 1761. In this same letter Wesley mentions Walker's impending death, and also describes Grimshaw saying that, "a few such as him would make a nation tremble. He carried fire wherever he goes."

⁴⁰⁶ *Letters* (Telford) 4:160, and 4:216-217 (Wesley to Venn, June 22, 1763); Jackson, *Early Methodist Preachers*, 4:34.

⁴⁰⁷ See Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 186 and *Letters* (Telford), 4:215-18 (Wesley to Venn, June 22, 1763). Grimshaw built chapels in his parish. The description of a "Methodist" chapel seems to fit better in Grimshaw's case. His cooperation with Wesleyan Methodism makes it more likely than in the case of Venn. See Baker, *William Grimshaw, 1708-1763* (London, Epworth Press, 1963), 223, 252-253.

good ordering of their parishes. Venn's case is a prime example of a cooperative effort between regular and irregular elements of the Revival, both of whom were answerable to larger constituencies.

In the case of Venn, just the year before he and Wesley agreed to limit the lay preachers in his parish, Venn had preached a visitation sermon widely published entitled *The Duty of a Parish Priest: His Obligations to Perform It; and the Incomparable Pleasure of a Life Devoted to the Cure of Souls*. In the sermon, Venn praised the work of the parish priest and his ability to affect transformation in the lives of the parishioners under his care. Like Bishop Gibson, Venn was convinced that the parish system offered the best means of promoting the Christian faith throughout the nation.

With a concern for the proclamation of the Gospel in a popular form, Venn wrote:

A more popular Way is continually wanted for the Multitude; and such a one as Men of common Parts may walk in. Now, such a Way, every faithful, conscientious Pastor is enabled to take with his Flock. He can display before their Eyes those all-sufficient Assistances, and mighty Privileges; that Grace, Mercy, and Peace from GOD the Father, and from the Lord JESUS CHRIST, which the Gospel promises, and when truly believed, gives Men now to possess. This, from an experiential Acquaintance with them, he can do in such a Manner, that Deism shall appear that worthless, impotent, forlorn Thing it really is; and, put in Comparison with the glorious Gospel, shall share the ignominious Fate of its Fellow-Idol of old; like the Dagon of the uncircumcised Philistines, it shall fall to the Ground before the Ark of the GOD of Israel.⁴⁰⁸

Venn's request that Wesley stop the flow of itinerant lay preachers into his parish fits well within the ideological slant of this popular sermon. Unlike other Evangelicals who settled into parishes,

⁴⁰⁸ Henry Venn, "*The Duty of a Parish Priest: His Obligations to Perform It; and the Incomparable Pleasure of a Life Devoted to the Cure of Souls*." *A Visitation Sermon at Wakefield on Col. 4.17. July 2, 1760* (Leedes: Printed by G. Wright, 1760), 19.

such as Newton, Venn did not intend to separate himself from Wesley, but simply to fulfill the duties of his ministry as he understood them.⁴⁰⁹

The year 1761 was a year of cooperation between Wesley and the Evangelicals, but only as Wesley compromised aspects of his irregular ministry. At Kippax, a confluence of the Revival could be seen in that year when Venn, Wesley, and Romaine all visited and participated in the life of the parish at the same time. Wesley wrote in his journal:

From Branley I rode to Kippax. Mr. Venn came a little after we were gone into the church. Mr. Romaine read prayers. I preached on “Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness”. O why should they who agree in this great point fall out about smaller things!⁴¹⁰

Ward notes that Kippax, a substantial parish in Yorkshire and a mining community, had become this “constellation of evangelical clergy” due to Lady Huntingdon’s niece, Mrs. Medhurst, who lived in the parish. Evangelical Samuel Furley was acting curate in the parish, and had been a friend of Venn’s at Cambridge and curate to Romaine in London immediately after his ordination.⁴¹¹ This cooperation, the compromise, and even the friendship with Venn all came to an end within a few short years. By 1764, the Huddersfield Compromise was at an end.

In the continuing drama of Wesley’s relationship to the Evangelical clergy related to Wesley’s use and recruitment of lay preachers, the conference of 1764 was a watershed after which the use of lay preachers is assumed by both groups and their separation further ensured.

⁴⁰⁹ Hindmarsh notes that, “Charged with the cure of souls, Newton did not in any case want to appear to condone Wesley’s teaching through continued co-operation, since there would not be wider pastoral implications of his friendship with Wesley” (*John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition*, 135).

⁴¹⁰ *Works*, 21:338.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, fn. 99.

At a very basic level the Wesleyan Conferences were simply the meetings where it was determined what Wesleyan Methodists would teach, who would teach, and where they would promulgate their message.⁴¹² They were small meetings attended by few, and should not be seen as the headline-making events that later Methodist propagandists would have them be.

Wesley's intention for the August 1764 meeting in Bristol was "for was a good understanding with all our brethren of the clergy who are heartily engaged in propagating vital religion."⁴¹³ Wesley's intentions for a cooperative effort with the Evangelicals met what Baker describes as his "readiness to go only so far in sacrificing Methodism to the Church."⁴¹⁴ Wesley would not, for instance, settle his itinerants and Baker further notes that this willingness only to go so far "would not endear him to those who (like his brother Charles) did not acknowledge the same scale of values."⁴¹⁵

This different scale of values played out in the course of the conference. Rack notes that some manuscript evidence of the conference indicates that the twelve clergy who attended that year "came to oppose, not to cooperate," although it is not exactly clear how accurately this description fits the actual intentions of the gathered clergy.⁴¹⁶ The outcome of the conference

⁴¹² *Works*, 10:122-123.

⁴¹³ *Works*, 21:485 (Aug. 6, 1764), and *Works*, 10:298.

⁴¹⁴ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 186.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁶ *Works*, 10:298, fn. 1026: "Sutcliffe's MS 'History' (fol. 641) says that the clergy came to oppose, not to cooperate."

would give credence to this evidence, although both Wesley and John Pawson's accounts describe the clergy's attendance more in terms of concern than of opposition.

Pawson noted in his *Short Account* that "twelve clergymen attended that Conference, whose principal business was to convince us that we ought not to preach in any parish where there was a gospel minister," adding that some of the clergy "were much more moderate than others."⁴¹⁷ Pawson's definition of "moderate" corresponds to irregularity. Highlighting the varied perspectives of the Evangelicals to irregularity, Pawson wrote that "one of them said 'if a layman was called of God to preach the gospel, then he had as good a right to do it as any clergyman whatever.' Mr. Madan could not agree to this, but said he would not dare to forbid such a person."⁴¹⁸ These ideologically "moderate" Evangelicals, along with their more conservative colleagues, were at the Conference, however, to address specifically the issue of lay preaching incursions into the confines of their legal parishes.

Charles Wesley provided the greatest fireworks at the conference when he and lay preacher John Hampson, Sr., representing the ideological divide that dominated the Evangelical/Methodist relationship by the 1760s, broke out in an angry display. According to Pawson's *Short Account*, Charles claimed that "If he was a settled minister in any particular parish, the preachers should not preach there." Hampson, ever ready to challenge the High Church Charles, replied, "I would preach there and never ask you leave, and should think I had as good a right so do as you had." To this, Charles is said to have retorted: "I know you are a grievous wolf, and you will tear the flock

⁴¹⁷ *Works*, 10:298.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

when once mine and my brother's heads are laid, if God do not give you repentance.”⁴¹⁹ This episode was later left out of the official documents of conference,⁴²⁰ but makes it plain from Charles's perspective why he later wrote to his brother to declare that: “the short remains of my life are devoted to this very thing, to follow your sons . . . with buckets of water, and quench the flame of strife and division which they have or may kindle.”⁴²¹

John Hampson, Sr., had an uncomfortable relationship with authority throughout his ministry within Wesleyan Methodism. There is reason to doubt that he was ever officially appointed by Wesley until 1777, although he itinerated among the Methodists as early as the 1750s.⁴²² At the 1760 conference he was one of the itinerants who promoted the idea that laymen could administer the Sacraments. In 1765 he was apparently found to be negligent of the care of the Kingswood School children,⁴²³ and by 1784 he and his son left the Wesleyan Connexion altogether over the Deed of Declaration. Their departure was not quiet. Hampson, Sr., published

⁴¹⁹ Ibid. For further descriptions of the interplay between Charles Wesley and Hampson see Ward's footnote in *Works*, 21:485, as well as John Pawson, *An Affectionate Address to the Members of the Methodist Societies, Containing an Account of the State of their Temporal Affairs, Namely, the Preachers Fund, the Yearly Collection, Kingswood Collection, and the Back-Room. In Which Some Notice is Taken of the False Accusations of Alexander Kilham* (London: 1795), 11; and William Myles, *A Chronological History of the People Called Methodists, Of the Connexion of the Late Rev. John Wesley; From Their Rise, in the Year 1729, to Their Last Conference, in 1812* (London: Printed at the Conference Office, 1813), 104-105.

⁴²⁰ Rack notes, “The closing interplay between Charles Wesley and Hampson was omitted from the revision in MM (1806): 845, and Jackson, *Early Methodist Preachers*, 4:28-29.” See *Works*, 10:298., See fn. 1027. Continuing this revisionism, Telford does not even mention the conference of 1764 in his *Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, Revised and Enlarged* (London: 1900).

⁴²¹ Frank Baker “Charles Wesley's Letters” in *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian*, S T Kimbrough, Jr., ed. (Nashville: Kingswood Press, 1992), 72-84. See also, 96-97.

⁴²² See C.J. Spittal's entry on Hampson in the *DEB*, 512.

⁴²³ *Works*, 10: 311, fn. 42.

an *Appeal to the Revered John and Charles Wesley* [sic] which caused an eruption in the conference. Wesley demanded that those who had written or supported the *Appeal* should “acknowledge their fault and be sorry for it, or he should have no further connection with them.”⁴²⁴ The two Hampsons, along with Joseph Pilmore, William Eells, and John Atlay left the conference, although it appears that Eells and Atlay may have recanted in time to leave again in 1788.⁴²⁵ Ironically, given his father’s dissenting slant, John Hampson, Jr., was ordained a priest in the Church of England the year after Wesley’s death.⁴²⁶

What the conference of 1764 put on display were the strong feelings of both clergy and lay participants in the Revival, and especially those under the care of the Wesley brothers. The concerns of the Evangelical clergy were not addressed. By 1766, the conference agreed that “field preaching should not be omitted to please anyone” and lessened the requirements on Methodist itinerants attending Church of England services on Sundays.⁴²⁷ The Evangelicals departed the Wesleyan Methodist conference and along with Charles Wesley met soon after under the auspices of Lady Huntingdon. On Aug. 28, 1764, Charles wrote to Samuel Lloyd in London: “We have had a Conference of the gospel clergy at Lady H[untingdon]’s. Good, I think, will come out of it. I had much conversation with your friend Mr. Jesse. Her Ladyship has invited more than an

⁴²⁴ *DEB*, 547.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 548.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 512.

⁴²⁷ *Works*, 10:324-325.

hundred to the opening of her chapel at Bath.”⁴²⁸ Rack notes that “it seems likely that this otherwise unknown Conference was supplementary to and later” than John Wesley’s conference, and it appears that John had attempted to organize such a meeting with Lady Huntingdon for that time as early as May. What is clear is that John Wesley was not in attendance at that meeting.⁴²⁹ The trajectory of both the Wesleyans and the Evangelicals continued to go in ever-increasingly different directions.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 298.

⁴²⁹ *Works*, 21:338-339. According to his *Journal*, Wesley was in Derbyshire.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE EUCHARIST AND METHODIST ETHOS

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified; Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before thee, for all estates of men in thy holy Church, that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve thee, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Collect for Good Friday

If Methodist incursions into Evangelical parishes and the use of lay preachers were detrimental to Evangelical/Methodist relations, the issue of Eucharistic administration was equally damaging. The attempt on the part of many of Wesley's lay preachers to administer the Eucharist or gain the right to administer the Eucharist, either as laymen or after ordination at Wesley's hands, was seen by many within the Evangelical "party" as the end of their association. William Grimshaw, Wesley's close associate and head of the Methodist work in the north of England, warned Wesley that any attempt on the part of the lay preachers to administer the Sacraments would drive him from Methodism. Eucharistic practice, an issue that delves into theology as much as issues of church polity and authority, was seen by many to determine the true trajectory of Wesleyan Methodism's place in the Church.

Grimshaw was one of Wesley's most stridently supportive Evangelical colleagues, but he grew uncomfortable with the association of Methodism with official dissent.⁴³⁰ He was a leading

⁴³⁰ Baker, *Wesley and the Church*, 175-177.

supporter of the itinerant practices of Methodism, the formation of societies, and of the use of lay preachers, but Grimshaw was unwilling to remain connected to Methodism as it began to advocate or discuss matters of outright dissent from the Church.⁴³¹ His oversight of the large and ever-expanding Haworth Round, a string of Methodist societies in and around his parish, was put in jeopardy by the continual push of Wesley's itinerants to align themselves and the movement with outright defiance of the Church. Charles Wesley was instrumental in igniting Grimshaw's reaction. Before the issues of licensing, ordination, and sacramental administration were discussed at the 1760 conference, Charles sent Grimshaw a letter:

Our preaching-houses are mostly licensed, and therefore proper meeting-houses. Our preachers are mostly licensed, and so dissenting ministers. They took out their licences as Protestant Dissenters. Three of our steadiest preachers give the Sacrament at Norwich with no other ordination or authority than their sixpenny licence. My brother approves of it. All the rest will most probably follow their example.⁴³²

The Methodists under Wesley had moved further from the Church than Grimshaw had imagined. Or at least this was Charles Wesley's interpretations of his brother's actions. John Wesley, in order to mitigate the effects of the Conventicle Act, allowed the registration of Methodist preaching houses but remained defiant that he had not left the Church.⁴³³ Whether either Wesley was right in his interpretation of the situation, Baker notes that Grimshaw had complained specifically

⁴³¹ See Baker, *Grimshaw*.

⁴³² Baker, *Wesley and the Church of England*, 176.

⁴³³ See Hempton, *The Religion of the People*, 148. Hempton notes that Wesley refused to accept registration of Methodist preaching houses as a form of separation, but "a device to protect life and property from the license of the crowd."

about the licensing of preaching-houses in the North.⁴³⁴ His response to Charles's letter started a firestorm in the London society that Charles used to promote his crusade to keep Methodism within the Church. Grimshaw's letter made it plain that he would not countenance any connection to Methodism as a dissenting body. Grimshaw wrote in a letter to Charles:

It's time for me to shift for myself—to disown all connection with the Methodists, to stay at home and take care of my parish, or to preach abroad in such places as are unlicensed and to such people as are in no connection with us. I hereby therefore assure you that I disclaim all further and future connection with the Methodists.⁴³⁵

As a priest within the Church, connection to a dissenting group under his care and the administration of the Sacrament by laymen within it called into question his own loyalty and ultimately his ordination.

Likely because of the close friendship he had with Grimshaw, Wesley never challenged his squeamishness for use of the Act of Toleration. Charles used Grimshaw's concerns to bolster his already pronounced war against Methodist schism. Wesley was quick, however, to challenge Thomas Adam's criticism of Wesleyan lay preachers becoming licensed dissenters. In a letter from 1768 toward the end of any meaningful cooperation between Evangelicals and Methodists, Wesley claimed that the Methodists had little or no choice in the matter. He challenged Adam and wrote that "One of Wintringham informed me yesterday that you said no sensible and well-meaning man could hear and much less join the Methodists; because they all acted under a lie, professing themselves members of the Church of England while they licensed themselves as Dissenters."

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 177.

⁴³⁵ Baker, *Grimshaw*, 255-7.

Wesley was quick to add, “You are little misinformed.”⁴³⁶ Wesleyan Methodist lay preachers had been attempting for some time to gain the protection of the Toleration Act without having to declare themselves dissenting. Wesley’s arguments no doubt held little sway with the orthodox Adam. Nor is it likely that Wesley’s insistence that Adam needed the Methodists more than they needed him a statement conducive of lasting friendship. Wesley arrogantly concluded his rebuttal of Adam’s censure by challenging the usefulness of Adam’s work within the parish structure of the Church. He wrote:

O sir, what art of men or devils is this which makes you so studiously stand aloof from those who are thus minded I cannot but say to you, as I did to Mr. Walker (and I say it the more freely because *Quid mea refert* I am neither better nor worse, whether you hear or forbear), “The Methodists do not want you; but you want them.” You want the life, the spirit, the power which they have, not of themselves, but by the free grace of God; else how could it be (let me speak without reserve) that so good a man and so good a preacher should have so little fruit of his labour—his unwearied labour—for so many years. Have your parishioners the life of religion in their souls? Have they so much as the form of it? Are the people of Wintringham in general any better than those of Winterton or Horton? Alas! sir, what is it that hinders your reaping the fruit of so much pains and so many prayers?⁴³⁷

Regardless of Wesley’s claims, the number of Methodist preachers and preaching houses licensed as dissenting had been rising throughout the early period of the Revival. In fact, the first preaching house ever built, the New Room in Bristol, was one of those meetings houses registered under the Act.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁶ *Letters* (Telford), 5:98 (John Wesley to Thomas Adam, July 19, 1768).

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5:99. Wesley was consistently cynical toward the efficacy of parish-based evangelical efforts. At one point, he claimed that the only successful parish-based Evangelical was Samuel Walker. Ironically, perhaps, Walker’s parishioners wanted little or nothing to do with Wesley. See *Works* 26:149-152.

⁴³⁸ Richard Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 170. Heitzenrater notes that on the back of the document registering the building under the Act someone has written,

The issues that concerned Grimshaw, Adam, and Walker were already public knowledge and were being debated by Methodists publicly, including the Wesley brothers themselves. It was this public debate that most likely instigated Walker and Wesley's correspondence noted in the last chapter. If there can be said to be one reason why Wesley and George Thomson, for example, and many of the Evangelical clergy in general might no longer work together, the conference at Leeds in 1755 and the issues of separation and the ordination of lay preachers would have been for many reason enough. Similar to the conferences of 1760 and 1764 where the role and future use of lay preachers as itinerants was hotly debated, the conference of 1755 focused on the issues of ordination and sacramental administration.

Methodist Identity and the 1755 Conference

Wesley describes the 1755 conference in his journal in terms of the legality of Methodist separation when he writes:

Tue. [May] 6 [, 1755]. Our Conference began at Leeds. The point on which we desired all the preachers to speak their minds at large was, whether we ought to separate from the Church. Whatever was advanced on one side or the other was seriously and calmly considered. And on the third day we were all fully agreed in that general conclusion, that (whether it was lawful or not) it was no ways expedient.⁴³⁹

Ward notes in his footnote on this text that John Wesley's "minutes of the Leeds Conference are even more terse than this laconic account" adding that "the issue was the more painful, not merely

"Needless, useless, senseless," and that the very registering of Methodist buildings under the Act conflicts with Wesley's *Father Appeal* (1745), see John Wesley, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Open Letters*, Gerald R. Craig, ed., Volume 11 of the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 183.

⁴³⁹ *Works*, 21:10-11 (May 6, 1755).

because of the conflict it generated between the stiff churchmanship of Charles Wesley and the desire of experienced preachers like [John] Cownley and [Thomas] Walsh to administer the sacraments, but because of the almost desperate indecision in [John Wesley] himself.”⁴⁴⁰ Ward describes the arguments for separation as “a curious mixture of rationalism, Protestantism, and pietism in that order, with [Wesley] admitting [to Walker in a subsequent letter] ‘I will freely acknowledge that I cannot answer these arguments to my own satisfaction. So that my conclusion (which I cannot yet give up) that it is lawful to continue in the Church, stands, I know not how, almost without any premises that are able to bear its weight.’”⁴⁴¹

The question is what Wesley meant by “lawful.” It was entirely lawful to become a dissenting body in 1755. The term could have something to do with defining lawful in terms of not violating one’s conscience, based upon the “law of conscience” highlighted in works such as Bishop Robert Sanderson’s *Lectures on Conscience and Human Law* published originally in 1615. Sanderson’s work dealt explicitly with the conflict between what he termed “human laws” and “conscience,” and the obligations that such a conflict demands.⁴⁴² It called for giving a place to conscience when one felt conflicted by human laws. Such an assertion would call into question the epistemological underpinnings of ecclesiastical structures based upon the idea of an apostolic succession. Thus Methodist complaints essentially came from a different epistemological understanding of church and one that could not have either sustained itself within the Church of

⁴⁴⁰Ibid., *Works*, 21:11n.

⁴⁴¹Ibid., for Wesley’s letter to Walker, *Works*, 26:594.

⁴⁴² Robert Sanderson, *Lectures on Conscience and Human Law: Delivered in the Divinity School at Oxford* (Lincoln: James Williamson, 1615, 1877).

England as a party, or as Wesley envisioned it, practiced his four-fold structure of Church, Society, Class, and Band. These Methodists wanted to make the Church like the Wesleyan society. But essentially they were following what had commonly been called by this time the “law of conscience,” an idea that applied Enlightenment values and reason to seemingly contradictory principles.

The crisis of 1755 should be seen as the first major battle for Methodist ecclesiastical identity within Wesley’s lifetime that would also include skirmishes at the conferences of 1760 and 1764 that culminated in the ordinations of 1784. This string of conflicts represents the blossoming of Methodist identity. After both John and Charles Wesley had died, these same battles raged for years, especially in the 1790s when “Church” Methodists, trustees, preachers, and a populist movement within Methodism to separate from the Church of England clashed with a vengeance. Issues that had arisen during the time of the Wesleys only became more divisive after their deaths. The crisis of 1755 can simply be seen as the first shots of a much longer battle.⁴⁴³

The crisis of 1755 itself was caused by concerns on the part of Wesley’s preachers for the spiritual welfare of their people. Already by this time, the lay preachers were beginning to look upon the Methodist people as though they were under their pastoral care. In line with dissent, the lay itinerants were beginning to see their work as separate from the work of the Church, a way of thinking that can easily be ascribed to Methodism’s widening detachment from the liturgical and structural patterns of the local parishes.⁴⁴⁴ It should be noted that the preachers were not the only

⁴⁴³ See especially Hempton, *Methodism and British Politics*, 55-84.

ones clamoring for Methodist administration. Members of the societies, the same persons under the spiritual care of the lay preachers, were often loath to take the Sacrament from the hand of a clergyman who berated Methodism or whose morality was under suspicion by the tight-lipped Wesleyans. John Wesley described a scene in the 1780s that is a perfect picture of this Methodist aversion. In a journal entry describing a Sunday service in the church in which he grew up, Wesley wrote:

I fain *would* prevent the members here from leaving the church, but I cannot do it. As Mr. G[ibson] is not a pious man, but rather an enemy to piety, who frequently preaches against the truth and those that hold and love it, I cannot with all my influence persuade them either to hear him or to attend the Sacrament administered by him. If I cannot carry this point even while I live, who then can do it when I die? And the case of Epworth is the case of every church where the minister neither loves nor preaches the gospel. The Methodists *will not* attend his ministrations. What then is to be done?⁴⁴⁵

The preachers were not alone in their desire to share the Sacrament within the warm embrace of Methodism. Such a pursuit, however, would lead the Methodists to dissent. In a sense, 1755 can be seen as the beginning of that journey to dissent, and Wesleyan Methodism's departure from Anglicanism. The subsequent conferences, deeds, and ordinations can be seen as the growing pains of a movement coming to maturity and leaving the nest.

In his biography of Wesley, Tyerman wrote: "The year 1755 was a crisis. It was an infinite mercy that Methodism was not dashed to pieces."⁴⁴⁶ Tyerman's description of the crisis was

⁴⁴⁴ See the Minutes for the 1755 conference. The minutes, beginning that year, show increasing detachment from the Church on the part of the preachers. In 1755, this can be seen in the preachers' surprised reaction to the Wesleys' opposition to their administration of Holy Communion. See *Works*, 10:271-272.

⁴⁴⁵ *Works*, 24:100-101.

anything but balanced, however.⁴⁴⁷ In his description, Tyerman leapt into pro-sectarian Methodist propaganda to describe the arguments of the 1755 Leeds Conference. Tyerman's argument hinges on the "right" of Methodist sacramental activity and the entitlement of the Methodist preachers to administer the sacraments. He even goes so far as to claim that the men arguing for sacramental rights "were as capable of forming correct opinions as the two Wesleys were."⁴⁴⁸ His statement reeks with nineteenth-century arguments comparing the Oxford and Cambridge trained clergy of the Established Church and their Methodist revivalist counterparts. The historiographical slant which Tyerman used was based upon the arguments of the lay preachers in the 1750s and 1760s. By the nineteenth century this line of thinking had become the standard line of a dissenting Methodism. Tyerman wrote that "Cownley, Walsh, and the Perronets were right, but the time was scarcely come for this to be acknowledged."⁴⁴⁹

As he would later in 1760, Charles Wesley was already before the conference of 1755 writing letters to Evangelicals in an effort to get them to weigh in on the side of conformity. Baker notes that "Charles continued to undermine John's apparent drift away from the Church of England by fiery letters to clergy otherwise friendly to Methodism, realizing that their advocacy

⁴⁴⁶ Luke Tyerman, *Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Founder of the Methodists*, 3 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1872), 2:200.

⁴⁴⁷ See Ibid., 200-211. In spite of this propagandic hue, Heitzenrater and Ward refer to Tyerman's account in his notes on the *Journal* in the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley as the fullest account we have. Their footnote, however, was written before the publication of Volume 10 of the *Works* by Henry Rack. What their footnote may indicate more than anything else, is the critical need for the Bicentennial Works project in face of the propaganda, myth, and sectarianism still inhibiting modern Wesley scholarship without a complete critical edition of the necessary primary sources.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 200.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 200.

would make a far greater impact upon John than his own.”⁴⁵⁰ In particular, Charles wrote several letters to the Evangelical Walter Sellon of Leicestershire.⁴⁵¹

This particular correspondence between Charles and Sellon began in 1754 when Charles became aware of the issues that would be debated at the next conference. He wrote to Sellon:

I have always loved you, but never so much as now. How unlike the spirit of poor Perronet and his associates! What a pity, that such spirits should have any influence over my brother! They are continually urging him to a separation; that is, to pull down all he has built, to put a sword in our enemies' hands, to destroy the work, scatter the flock, disgrace himself, and go out—like the snuff of a candle.⁴⁵²

Charles added a reminder of the “debt you owe the Methodists and me, and the Church” as well as Wesley to write “a full, close, plain transcript of your heart on this occasion.”⁴⁵³

Charles's letters to Sellon requesting his assistance continued. Apparently he was not convinced that his brother was fully against schism. He asked Sellon in December of 1754 to write to Wesley again and “spare not” because “the Melchisedechians have been taken in” and apparently Charles was being excluded from conversations related to the Methodists and the Church. Charles continued to “stand in doubt” of his brother, the fact of which he wanted Sellon

⁴⁵⁰Frank Baker, “Charles Wesley's Letters” in *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian*, S T Kimbrough, Jr., ed. (Nashville: Kingswood Press, 1992), 79.

⁴⁵¹ A. S. Wood lists both Walter Sellon and John Meriton as Evangelical clergy who travelled with John Wesley. See A.S. Wood, *Brothers in Arms: John Wesley's Early Clerical Associates* (Wesley Historical Society Publishing Office, 1992), 18-22. See also *Works* 20: 473 n.13.

⁴⁵² Tyerman, 201-202., Charles Wesley to Rev. Walter Sellon, settled at Smithsby, near Ashby-de-la-Zouch, probably c. 1754. Baker notes in *John Wesley and the Church of England* that the MS letter is located at Drew University. He provides a date of November 29, 1754. See 374, fn. 15.

⁴⁵³ Tyerman, 201-202. Sellon had been a baker, was converted by Whitefield, and became one of Wesley itinerants. Later, by the influence of Lady Huntingdon, he was given holy orders in the Church. Sellon became instrumental in the later “Calvinist Controversies” of the 1770s.

to be aware but not the general public. His intentions were to end the debates by finding a way to qualify the lay preachers for holy orders, and he was convinced that Sellon could be of assistance in the effort. He wrote, “I know none fitter for training up the young men in learning than yourself or J. Jones. We must, among us, get the sound preachers qualified for orders.”⁴⁵⁴

During this period, Charles continued to hear reports from various supporters of his attempts to maintain Methodism’s place within the Church. In his shorthand diary, Charles outlined reports he had gathered from October of 1754. On two consecutive days, three different Methodist women reported that the lay preachers were administering the Eucharist. Charles was informed by “Sister Macdonald” and then “Sister Clay” that Charles Perronet had given the Sacrament to the lay preachers “Walsh and Deavens, and then to twelve at Sister Gardner’s, in the Minories.” The next day, “Sister Meredith” reported hearing that “Walsh had administered the sacrament at Reading.”⁴⁵⁵ According to the diary, Charles was with his brother the day after he had received these reports and he records his brother as saying in response to them, “We have in effect ordained already.” Wesley was, according to his brother, “inclined to lay on hands; and to let the

⁴⁵⁴ Tyerman, 202. “J. Jones” is likely John Jones, John Wesley’s assistant in the mid-1740s. Jones was ordained in 1767. According to R. Davies, “He had been refused episcopal ordination several times in his early years, because, presumably, of his Methodism.” *DEB*, 621.

⁴⁵⁵ Tyerman, 202, fn. 1. These particular references come from Charles Wesley’s journal letters, which were distinct from his *Manuscript Journal*, recently published by Kingswood Press. See Richard Heitzenrater, “Purge the Preachers: The Wesleys and Quality Control” in *Charles Wesley: Life, Literature, and Legacy*, ed. Ted A. Campbell and Kenneth Newport (London: Epworth Press, 2008).

preachers administer.” Five days later, Wesley was supposedly still wavering, but apparently willing to wait before proceeding with any ordinations.⁴⁵⁶

This back and forth on Wesley’s part is particularly pronounced in this period as he continued to struggle between a dichotomy which began to see Church tradition and authority in competition with the spiritual needs of the Methodist people. This wavering on the part of John Wesley simply confirmed the worst fears of his brother and likely worked to solidify Charles’s opposition to any irregularities on the part of the itinerants. His brother’s wavering encouraged Charles’s continued letter writing.

In February of 1755 Charles wrote to Sellon one more time about his efforts to sway Wesley away from dissent. Apparently Sellon had sent multiple letters which along with “some others” and these efforts had made Wesley “forget he was ever inclined” to the ordination of the lay preachers or of lay administration of the Eucharist.⁴⁵⁷ Charles wrote that Wesley “has spoken as strongly of late, in behalf of the Church of England, as I could wish,” adding that Wesley now “never intends to leave her.”⁴⁵⁸ This certainty on Charles’s part was short-lived. Wesley’s wavering

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid. John Lenton notes in his book on the early preachers that, “From the early days preachers were admitted to the status of travelling preacher in a solemn service. Joseph Cownley in 1747 had the New Testament put in his hands with the words ‘take thou authority to preach the Gospel.’” See Lenton, *Wesley’s Preachers*, 75. Such a designation would have explicitly mirrored the Ordination of Deacons in the Book of Common Prayer. For the fuller story see Jackson, *Early Methodist Preachers* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1865), 2:7. Rack does not necessarily accept the historical validity of the Cownley account. The procedure for the acceptance of lay preachers was described in the 1749 Large Minutes. Rack does admit that, “Two well-known incidents might suggest a quasi-ordination of preachers distinct from Wesley’s acknowledged ordinations,” although he also acknowledges that the historical record is not clear. The likelihood is that no formal procedure was in place in the early years of Wesleyan Methodism. See *Works*, 10:77.

⁴⁵⁷ Tyerman, 203. Charles Wesley to Sellon, Feb. 4, 1755.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

commitment to his brother's plan to settle many of the lay preachers and to demand statements of Church loyalty from them continued to unnerve his brother.⁴⁵⁹ Charles never showed full confidence in the lay preachers until they were in holy orders, and few of them took that route. He was convinced that without ordination in the Church of England, the lay preachers would continue to promote separation while the brothers were living and succeed at their attempts once they were both deceased. Charles ended his letter to Sellon by reporting on the efforts of Evangelicals around London. He pleaded to Sellon to "pray for them and for us."⁴⁶⁰

The conference of 1755 did not take place until May of that year. According to J. R. Tyson, the Leeds Conference was pivotal to Methodism's connection to the Church of England. He notes that "over sixty-three Methodist preachers arrived to debate the 'question of conservation'" and claimed that such numbers represent the importance of the topics addressed.⁴⁶¹ By May 25 Charles published his public answer to the proceedings in *An Epistle to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, by Charles Wesley, Presbyter of the Church of England*.⁴⁶² Charles published 4,000 copies of this lyrical tract against the Methodist preachers and his brother. The question is whether or not this very public plea made the Evangelical Anglicans even more suspect of Methodism's dissenting

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., (See the Feb. 4 letter for Charles Wesley intention to divide the lay preachers "church or meeting").

⁴⁶⁰ Tyerman, 203.

⁴⁶¹ John R. Tyson, ed., *Charles Wesley: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 408. Rack doubts the numbers reported by the participants. See *Works*, 10:270, fn. 949.

⁴⁶² Note that Charles describes himself as a "presbyter of the Church of England" in the title, and although John was also a presbyter, Charles does not mention it on the title page.

tendencies, such as Samuel Walker's and Charles Wesley's pleas for John Wesley not to "air the laundry" had insinuated earlier.

Stanley Ayling has written that "there had never been a time when the Wesley brothers did not feel free to criticize one another," but this publication on Charles's part represents a particularly public condemnation of his brother.⁴⁶³ His criticism of his brother would never again be so loud until the 1784 ordinations. Charles wrote that the Methodists are not the Church nor should they think of themselves as such.

Yet still the Methodists *The Church* are not:
A single Faculty is not the Soul,
A Limb the Body, or a Part the Whole.

From Charles's perspective, the Methodists were abandoning their calling to be a renewal movement within the Church and had thus misunderstood their place:

But should the bold usurping Spirit dare
Still higher climb, and sit in Moses's chair,
Power o'er my Faith and Consience to maintain,
Shall I submit, and suffer it to reign?
Call it *the Church*, and Darkness put for Light,
Falsehood with Truth confound, and Wrong with Right?

No: I dispute the Evil's haughty Claim,
The Spirit of the World be still its Name,
Whatever call'd by Man it's purely Evil,
'Tis Babel, Antichrist, and Pope, and Devil!⁴⁶⁴

For Charles, the assumptions made on the part of the lay preachers went beyond the rightful duty of lay persons with little or no education and who were not episcopally ordained. He would

⁴⁶³ Stanley Ayling, *John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979), 232.

⁴⁶⁴ Tyson, *Charles Wesley*, 411.

publish this tract again in 1784 after John had ordained Coke, Whatcoat and Vasey for the work in the United States. The arguments remained the same for him throughout this period. By 1750, he was securely positioned as Methodism's Churchman.⁴⁶⁵ It was John's ecclesiology that was undergoing continued change. Charles's ecclesiology is summarized in a line of his tract when he claims that "The Church of Christ *and England*—is But One!"⁴⁶⁶

Charles published four thousand copies of his *Epistle*. They were printed by William Straham at a cost of eight guineas. In a letter to his wife, Sarah, he wrote: "On Thursday I read my *Epistle* a second time to a crowded audience and yesterday at the watch-night. Seven hundred are sent by this day's carrier."⁴⁶⁷ If he was not convinced of the lay preachers' sincerity at the conference, he was determined to publicly shame them and his brother into conformity.

Charles's concerns with the integrity of the lay preachers had as much to do with John's continually evolving understanding of ordination.⁴⁶⁸ By 1755 not only had Wesley told his brother at one point that they had "in effect ordained already," but he was at times beginning to sound

⁴⁶⁵ Charles was, however, not consistent in his churchmanship before the 1750s. Rack points to this discrepancy in *Reasonable Enthusiast* (304). Nor, was he ever as staunchly committed to the parish system of the Church as were the majority of Evangelical Anglicans. Charles was consistent in his opposition to schism. As early as 1739, he was working diligently to stop a schism brewing in the Fetter Lane Society. He recorded in his journal for Feb. 28, 1739 that he "met the bands at John Bray's, and cautioned them against schism." In April of the same year he continued his efforts against the "wild ramblings" of John Shaw, a member of the society, whose ideas about the "Christian priesthood" were seen as heretical to Charles. See Charles Wesley, *Manuscript Journal*, 1:170.

⁴⁶⁶ Tyson, *Charles Wesley*, 412.

⁴⁶⁷ Jackson, *Charles's Wesley*, 2:81.

⁴⁶⁸ Throughout much of this period Charles looked for ways to have the preachers ordained within the regular ministry of the Church. In 1756, he and Walker presented a plan to Wesley to have many of the preachers ordained—a plan that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Herring, was sympathetic toward. See Baker, *Wesley and the Church of England*, 171; Baker, *Charles Wesley*, 95; and Sidney, *Walker*, 201-203.

much like the Puritans in his understanding of ordination. Baker described Wesley's evolving understanding of ordination at this time, arguing that for Wesley in 1755 "true ordination, the conferring of spiritual grace, was the work of God alone."⁴⁶⁹ For Wesley, the role of the Church was simply "through its authorized officials to acknowledge the divine call and divine empowerment, adding the seal of its own commission so that the minister would generally be recognized as such."⁴⁷⁰ This description of ordination almost negates the necessity of an episcopacy. It quite clearly disregards the more catholic understanding of ordination as a sacramental action restricted to an episcopate in succession with the apostles. Three years later in 1758, Wesley appears to have again adapted his understanding of ordination to support episcopal ordination in his *Treatise on Baptism*.⁴⁷¹

John Wesley's letter to Charles written after the publication of Charles's *Epistle* provides a clue to the internal debate between the brothers. Charles was obviously not convinced by the promise of the lay preachers not to administer the Sacrament. Ironically, two sons of the Vicar of Shoreham, the Perronets, had administered the Sacrament, as had lay preachers Joseph Cownley and Thomas Walsh. The four of them were, according to Telford, "leaders of this movement" for lay administration. John wrote to his brother, "Do not you understand that they all promised by Thomas Walsh not to administer even among themselves? I think that an huge point given up—

⁴⁶⁹ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 154.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ *Works* (Jackson) 10:190.

perhaps more than they could give up with a clear conscience. . . .When I reflect on their answer I admired their spirit and was ashamed of my own.”⁴⁷²

Wesley’s willingness to believe that the lay preachers had given up a major point of contention is key. Within the scheme of English ecclesiastical law, a tradition that Wesley begins to read with increasing leniency, there was no question of lay administration whatsoever. This may explain Charles’s hostility to the very notion. Charles was not convinced that a layman who had taken upon himself to act as an ordained clergyman without ordination would simply desist from further acts of dissent. John appears confused by all the fuss. He wrote to his brother in the same letter:

The practical conclusion was “Not to separate from the Church.” Did we not all agree in this? Surely either you or I must have been asleep or we could not differ so widely in a matter of fact! Here is Charles Perronet raving ‘because his friends have given up *all*’ and Charles Wesley ‘because they have given up *nothing*’; and I in the midst, staring and wondering both at one and the other. I do not want to do anything more, unless I could bring them over to my opinion; and I am not in haste for that.⁴⁷³

Wesley concludes this particular letter with a litany of practical concerns including tunes for Charles’s hymns, but ends it with a clue to the lay preachers’ concerns. He wrote: “Jos. Cowley says, ‘For such and such reasons I dare not hear a drunkard preach or read prayers.’ I answer, ‘I dare.’ But I can’t answer his reasons.”⁴⁷⁴ The spiritual, or even practical, concerns were becoming tantamount to law within the experiential nature of the Revival. What seems to be jettisoned with

⁴⁷² *Works*, 26:561 (Wesley to Charles Wesley, June 20, 1755).

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.* John included a comment that he is working on his *Notes*, a project that he was coordinating with the assistance of John Fletcher.

this shift is the legality of their actions and the political ramifications of acting as dissenters from the Church. The Wesley brothers were not oblivious to these concerns, although Charles was much more in tune to them than was his brother, but the lay preachers appear to be dominated by pastoral concerns exclusively. The issues of legality and the political ramifications only appear at conference once the deed is done.

To partake of the sacrament in the state-sponsored parish church was seen as a statement of conformity not simply with the Book of Common Prayer, but with the national aspirations of the English people. In the context of a possible war with France, these political connections gained special importance in the late 1750s. Thus John Fox could preach in a sermon at the height of this political tension:

Religion and Loyalty are the only true and certain Supports of any king of Kingdom. The best Christian is always the best Patriot; his Schemes procure the Alliance and Favour of the King of Kings; he truly serves his Country by being a leading Example of Virtue, and by using his Power to discountenance and punish Vice and Immorality.⁴⁷⁵

The sermon obviously argues for a unified English response to national crisis built upon religious uniformity.

One response to Charles's *Epistle* was written by a "Christophus" who, although anonymous, appears to have been an Evangelical himself from his use of terminology. The title of Christophus's work is *A Serious Inquiry Whether A Late Epistle from the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley To the Rev. Mr. John Wesley Be Not An Evident Mark of Their Being Unhappily Fallen*. According to

⁴⁷⁵ John Fox, *An Earnest Persuasive to the Manly Defense of Our Happy Constitution in Church and State; a Sermon, Preached in the Parish-Church of Kildwick-Piercy, in the County of York, on Friday, February 17, 1758* (York: 1758).

Christophus, all true members of the Church of England and the true Church of Christ cannot deny ecclesiastical authority:

For such can never belie, revile and villify that Church or her ministers, for fear of weakening at least the interest of Christianity, and scattering the flock of Christ, that they may the easier fall a prey to every wolf in sheep's cloathing, and settle down contentedly in a causeless and avowed separation from the Established Church, notwithstanding the apostle warns us all so strenuously to beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision, Phil. iii.2.⁴⁷⁶

While liberally quoting the Book of Common Prayer, the author warned those who think they can administer the Eucharist as lay persons by referring to God's punishment of those who had challenged the authority of Moses and Aaron. He wrote, "But how severely God punished this their usurpation of offices not belonging to them, and undervaluing those whom God had set over them, you may read at large in the 16th chapter of Numbers, for the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and all that appertained unto them."⁴⁷⁷ It is evident, however, that his warning was not simply meant to be heard by the lay preachers under Wesley's care, but by the Wesley brothers themselves. Christophus explicitly warned the Methodists not to fall into schism which he argued was a sign of being "more puffed up with spiritual pride and good opinions of themselves than with real and substantial holiness."⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁶Christophus, *A Serious Inquiry Whether A Late Epistle from the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley To the Rev. Mr. John Wesley Be Not An Evident Mark of Their Being Unhappily Fallen into One of the Most Crafty and Most Dangerous Wiles of the Devil, for the Delusion of Many Innocent, Unthinking Christians; by Inducing Their Hearers to Have Too High an Opinion of Them, as the Peculiar Servants of God, and Apostles Sent by Him to Have an Apostate, Sinking Church, and Encouraging them Utterly to Contemn Their Own Regular Pastors, Set Over Them by the Providence of God, Whom they by Their False Insinuations Represent as Apostates from the Church of England, and the True Church of Christ*; (London [?]: Printed for the Author, 1755), 10.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., 6.

The fact that any work was written in response to Charles's *Epistle* is proof enough that the debates within Methodism were no longer internal debates. These debates were public and therefore influencing public opinion of Methodism. In this case, the public perception of Methodism's place within the Church of England was being challenged by one of the Wesley brothers themselves.

John's response to Charles is not altogether positive. Of the lay preachers known to have fought for the right to administer the Eucharist, and who actually did administer it without permission at points in their ministry, Thomas Mitchell and Paul Greenwood were both appointed to Cornwall at this time.⁴⁷⁹ Whether or not they spoke openly about this issue is difficult to know.

What is obvious from the historical record and Wesley's journal even days after the conference is that Charles Wesley's suspicions were more accurate than were his brother's. Within a week of the conference, Wesley and his wife had travelled to Newcastle where he recorded in his journal, "I did not find things here in the order I expected. Many were on the point of leaving the Church, which some had done already—and as they supposed, on my authority!"⁴⁸⁰ The confusion among the Methodist rank-and-file simply mirrored the confusion conveyed by the leadership. Conflicts between the message of the Wesleys as Anglican clergyman

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁷⁹ *Works*, 10:272-275. Greenwood continued to promote lay administration. See John S. Pawlyn, *Bristol Methodism in John Wesley's Day: With Monographs of the Early Methodist Preachers* (Bristol: W.C. Hemmons, 1877): "Greenwood, several years later became somewhat conspicuous by persisting in his ecclesiastical right to administer the Sacrament in opposition to Charles Wesley's wish" (47).

⁴⁸⁰ *Works*, 21:11 (Tuesday, May 13, 1755).

and the method exemplified in the irregular system they had created would continue to plague the movement well into the next century.

In Norwich, this conflict between message and method came to a head when in 1758 Methodist preachers administered the Sacrament alongside dissenters. The particular situation in Norwich was unique in that the society at Norwich met together with an evangelical dissenting group. Close association with dissent simply pulled the Methodists further from their Anglican bearings.⁴⁸¹ The controversy that arose from this particular society once again brought the opposing factions of the 1755 conference together in the conference at Bristol in 1760.

The 1760 Conference and Sacramental Administration

Wesley's Norwich Foundry and the Norwich Tabernacle, a chapel built by Lady Huntingdon and led by William Cudworth, had begun meeting together in 1758. In a 1759 tour of the area, Wesley implemented some of the distinctive Wesleyan practices in the society including the introduction of classes, separate seating for the sexes, and class tickets.⁴⁸² His description of the society is of a harmonious ecumenical effort, apparently capable of blurring the

⁴⁸¹ An analysis of the religious upbringing of the preachers also sheds light on Wesleyan Methodism's general loss of Anglican identity. John Lenton notes that among Wesley's preachers their religious upbringing was:

40% Church of England/Ireland
25% Methodist
23% Dissent
6% Roman Catholic
6% Religious

See Lenton, *John Wesley's Preachers*, 45. The designation "Methodist" is telling in this period, and could represent Lenton's perspective. That the preachers might self-identify as Methodist rather than Church of England or Church of Ireland is indication of a form of separation.

⁴⁸² *Works*, 21:180.

lines of theological division that had marked aspects of the Revival. This ecumenical effort, however, ran aground with the increasing influence of dissent.

It is surprising that Wesley had such an optimistic view of the merger of his society with Cudworth's. Ward notes that Cudworth was a leading figure in a small Calvinistic Methodist connexion called "The hearers and followers of the Apostles," and that he and Wesley had engaged one another in polemical battles for almost twenty years.⁴⁸³ Wesley and Cudworth's divergent visions of the Revival came to a head in the administration of the Sacrament. Baker notes that "from the outset the Tabernacle worshipers had been accustomed to receive the Lord's Supper from their own preacher, William Cudworth" and argued that it was "almost certainly upon their insistence that Wesley's preachers administered communion here in 1760, and thus almost precipitated a separation from the Church of England."⁴⁸⁴

Rack describes the relationship between Methodist and other religious bodies as the major point of conversation in the 1760 conference.⁴⁸⁵ In February of that year, three of Wesley's itinerants had administered the Sacrament at the united Norwich society. And in March, Charles Wesley renewed his anti-schism crusade with a reprinting as a separate publication of his brother's 1758 *Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England*.⁴⁸⁶ He also wrote letters to his brother,

⁴⁸³ *Works*, 21:180, fn. 12.

⁴⁸⁴ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 129.

⁴⁸⁵ *Works*, 10:289.

⁴⁸⁶ See John Wesley, *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*, Volume 9 of the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley, ed. Rupert E. Davies (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 331-349. Rupert Davies notes in the introductory comments to the text in the Bicentennial Edition that the edition that Charles published in 1760

sarcastic letters to his wife, pastoral letters to societies in major cities, and, as was already mentioned, letters to Evangelicals who he could count on to support his vision for Methodism.⁴⁸⁷ Grimshaw's response, noted at the beginning of this chapter, was read by Charles to the London society and it "put them in a flame." Rack wrote that with all the preliminary events "the Bristol conference was going to prove a stormy gathering."⁴⁸⁸

Howell Harris was invited by Charles to come to the conference and recorded that when the lay preachers proposed to Wesley to ordain them he "said it was not clear to him that he had the power so to do except they were wholly cut off from the Church by a public act," and added that this would need to entail "a total renouncing of the bishops and the Established Church, which he could not do, and stumbling thousands."⁴⁸⁹ Wesley was simply repeating what he had published two years earlier in *Reasons against a Separation* when he wrote that the Methodists could not separate from the Church of England "because it would hinder multitudes of those who neither love nor fear God for hearing us at all, and thereby leave them in the hands of the devil."⁴⁹⁰ And likewise, a separation would "be throwing balls of wild-fire among them that are now quiet in the land."⁴⁹¹

contained "closing comments of his own" and seven hymns against separation added to the original text. John Wesley included the seven hymns when he published the treatise as a part of his *Works* of 1773. *Ibid.*, 333.

⁴⁸⁷ See especially Frank Baker, *Charles Wesley as Revealed in His Letters* (London: Epworth Press, 1948), 97-103, 272-282.

⁴⁸⁸ *Works*, 10:289.

⁴⁸⁹ *Works*, 10:290.

⁴⁹⁰ *Works*, 9:334.

Harris recounts Wesley saying to the preachers who wanted to justify their celebrating the sacrament that “he would renounce them in a quarter of an hour” and “that they were the most foolish and ignorant of the whole Conference.”⁴⁹² Yet these same preachers appear in Harris’s account to be dumbstruck not only by Wesley’s High Churchmanship but by the idea that the offices of prophet and priest were distinct.⁴⁹³ Wesley would not write his sermon on the topic, now known as “Prophets and Priests,” until the late 1780s.⁴⁹⁴ Harris’s account implies, although Harris was not an unbiased observer in these proceedings, that these preachers were simply ignorant of the Church’s traditions and of the roles and responsibilities of the ordained priesthood. They appear entirely detached both theologically and liturgically from the Church that the Wesley brothers so adamantly promoted among them. Commenting on the sermon, Outler notes that the concept of distinct roles for prophets and priests was common in the English Church and “went back to Richard Hooker and before.”⁴⁹⁵ While Charles described these “Melchezidekians” with acidic vitriol, Harris appears to be describing a group of Wesley’s helpers formed in and promoting a Methodism detached from its Anglican foundations.

Wesley published “Prophets and Priests” in 1790 and it was not well-received by the Methodists who by that time were irrevocably headed toward dissent. Outler provides a detailed

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² See *Works* 10:289-290.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Wesley wrote the sermon in 1789 as a response to a similar situation in the Irish Conference.

⁴⁹⁵ *Works*, 4:73. Outler footnotes Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, (1: xxxviii.6), and also claims that it was a distinction “differently nuanced” among the Puritans. See 4:73, fn. 2.

history of the sermon's publishing history.⁴⁹⁶ The sermon represents Wesley's dying wish to his followers, a last ditch effort to leave them united to the Church of England. Wesley wrote:

In 1744, all the Methodist preachers had their first Conference. But none of them dreamed that the being called to preach gave them any right to administer sacraments. And when that question was proposed, "In what light are we to consider ourselves?" it was answered, "As *extraordinary messengers*, raised up to provoke the *ordinary* ones to jealousy."⁴⁹⁷

In response to the question whether or not an appointment in the Methodist system entailed the right of sacramental administration, Wesley's response was that "such a design never entered into our mind; it was the farthest from our thoughts."⁴⁹⁸

Wesley argued in the sermon that the Methodist preachers were essentially what Walsh has described as a preaching order.⁴⁹⁹ Their sole purpose was to "preach the gospel" and to do otherwise would have been turning away from the very reason they existed. Wesley does comment on the controversy that arose in Norwich. He wrote that "it was several years after our society was formed" before any of the preachers attempted to administer the Sacraments. His memory was not accurate. The preachers had administered the Sacraments earlier in the previous decade. But Wesley describes the attempts at Norwich made by "one of our preachers" who had "yielded to the

⁴⁹⁶ See *Works*, 4:73-74. Outler wrote, "Since the sermon's first publication, Methodists have left it largely in limbo. George Story deliberately excluded it from [*Sermons on Several Occasions*], IX, as did Joseph Benson from his edition of the *Works*. Thomas Jackson decided to include it in his 1825 edition of the *Sermons* and the 1829-31 edition of the *Works*, but with Moore's disparaging comment quoted in full as an introductory note." Pg. 74. During the debates of the late nineteenth century over "rights" to John Wesley, the High Church Anglican, R. Denny Urlin, included a whole appendix on the sermon in his *The Churchman's Life of Wesley*.

⁴⁹⁷ *Works*, 4:79.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁹ Walsh, "John Wesley 1703-1791," 5.

importunity of a few.” He was insistent that “as soon as it was known, [the preacher] was informed it must not be, unless he designed to leave our connexion. He promised to do it no more—and I suppose he kept his promise.”⁵⁰⁰ Outler describes this description as “a blurred memory of a much more complicated episode.”⁵⁰¹

Wesley’s High Churchmanship and Methodism’s Distinctive Ethos

John Wesley’s sacramental theology is best summed up in his extract of Daniel Brevint’s *Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, the *Hymns on the Lord’s Supper* published by the two brothers, and the two sermons “The Means of Grace” and “The Duty of Constant Communion.”⁵⁰² Brevint, a Caroline divine, served as dean of Lincoln College after the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II. It is not surprising that Wesley, as a Fellow of Lincoln, would use Brevint’s work. It was at Lincoln in 1732 that Wesley rewrote the work of Non-Juror Robert Nelson to produce for his students what would later become his sermon “The Duty of Constant Communion.” In these sources, Wesley’s High Churchmanship is explicitly on display. In his extract of Brevint he claimed:

⁵⁰⁰ *Works*, 4:80.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, fn. 21.

⁵⁰² See J. Ernest Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley, to which is appended Wesley’s Preface Extracted from Brevint’s Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice together with Hymns on the Lord’s Supper*, American Edition, ed. Timothy J. Crouch (Cleveland: OSL Publications, 1990), and *Works*, 1:376-397, and 3:427-439. For the most comprehensive treatments of Wesley’s sacramental theology see Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments: A Definitive Study of John Wesley’s Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1972, 1985) and John C. Bowmer’s *The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in Early Methodism* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1951).

At the holy Table the people meet to worship God, and God is present to meet and bless the people. Here we are in a special manner invited to offer up to God our souls, our bodies, and whatever we can give: and God offers to us the Body and Blood of the Son, and all the other blessings which we have need to *receive*.⁵⁰³

Here the Book of Common Prayer undergirds the theology of both men, as they reiterate the Eucharistic Prayer of the Prayer Book.

Henry Knight, in his book on Wesley's understanding of the means of grace, argues that the context within which Wesley promoted his understanding of the importance of the means, and thus the Eucharist, was essential to understanding his theology. The very structure of the Methodist system, Knight argues, was consistent as a movement of societies, classes, and bands within the Church of England. He notes that Wesley "was not offering a vision of the Christian life which could be reasonably sought in any church and under any conditions," but rather one that was lived out "within the structures and discipline of the Methodist movement in the Church of England."⁵⁰⁴ Here, however, the consistency of Wesley's system was not always implemented or followed in the tumultuous context of the Revival.

The clash between Wesley's High Churchmanship, as exemplified in his understanding of the efficacy and necessity of the Sacraments, and a system of societies and bands which became increasingly separate from the liturgical and social bearing of the Church of England, can be seen in the controversy surrounding the lay preachers and ordination. While Rack notes that the root of the controversy was not the Eucharist but separation from the Church of England, the emphasis

⁵⁰³ Rattenbury, *The Eucharistic Hymns*, 145.

⁵⁰⁴ Knight, *The Presence of God in the Christian Life*, 2.

on the Sacrament within the increasingly distinct ethos of an isolated Methodism creates the context in which the lay preachers' requests and actions make sense.⁵⁰⁵ The lay preachers of early Methodism were simply caught up in the confusing dichotomy that was John Wesley. The continual efforts on the part of the lay preachers either to administer the Sacrament as laymen or receive ordination at Wesley's hand exemplify Wesley's High Churchmanship within the context of Methodism's liturgical detachment.

Describing the issue of the lay preachers and ordination, Rattenbury wrote that the issue caused "much trouble" to the Wesleys. Yet Rattenbury also emphasized the almost confused reaction of the lay preachers to the Wesleys' strictures. He wrote that "we may be assured that [the lay preachers'] own deep Sacramentalism and their sense of necessity of Holy Communion to the spiritual life of their people, was what made them so urgent."⁵⁰⁶ Rattenbury was quick, however, to place blame more on the Church for its opposition to Methodism than on Wesley's creation of an awkward ecclesiology.

The promotion of a strong eucharistic theology was not simply the creation of the Wesleys. The Evangelicals of the early period of the Revival were strong promoters of sacramental reception and the necessity of the Sacrament. Rattenbury argued that "nothing is more clear than the tremendous emphasis of the leading Evangelicals on the necessity of Eucharistic worship."⁵⁰⁷ Even some later Evangelicals, such as Charles Simeon, would promote eucharistic reception. Not all

⁵⁰⁵ See Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 419.

⁵⁰⁶ Rattenbury, *The Eucharist Hymns*, 5.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Evangelicals held to the high sacramentalism of the Wesleys, but they emphasized the importance of reception. Hindmarsh noted that for John Newton, the Saturday evening before the Sacrament was to be administered “became an occasion for particular spiritual seriousness, though, viewing the Lord’s Supper as a commemorative ordinance, Newton did not worry himself over questions of sacramental efficacy or the nature of the divine presence in the sacrament.”⁵⁰⁸

Adam’s *Catechism* is stridently High Church in its assessment of the centrality of the Eucharist for the Christian life. Adam argued in this highly influential Evangelical work that the Sacrament contained “the chief points of Christian knowledge;” “the Christian covenant, the Christian faith, the Christian obedience, the Christian prayer, are summed up and represented in it; enforced, or exercised by it.”⁵⁰⁹ Arguing for something similar to Wesley’s “duty of constant communion,” Adam asked if the lack of reception “is not darkness in the midst of gospel light, ignorance of Christ, and spiritual darkness in a country, what is?”⁵¹⁰

Ironically, the similar emphases of Adam and Wesley within their differing spheres may have promoted schism as much as it aided efforts to keep Methodism within the Church. The increasingly foreign sphere of the Anglican liturgy had to compete with the warmth of Methodist sacramental festivals such as those celebrated on a regular basis at the West Street Chapel in London, or even those later celebrated at City Road. Ironically, these celebrations were led by Evangelicals such as the Wesleys and Fletcher, all of whom intended to remain within the Church.

⁵⁰⁸ Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, 225.

⁵⁰⁹ Adam, *Practical Lectures*, 88.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

Continuing Struggles

The 1760 conference had officially dealt with the issue of lay administration of the Eucharist, and with the issue supposedly settled, John and Charles continued to look for a union not only with Evangelicals, but also with the Moravians.⁵¹¹ In 1763, it appears that Wesley's preachers in Norwich were still administering the Sacrament and that Wesley was willing to overlook the practice. His staunch stance in 1760 that lay administration was just as illegal as was "murder" had also changed. He thought it might be "legal," but that it was not "expedient."⁵¹² This description seems to fit better with Wesley's descriptions of the situation in 1755.

As the battle over lay administration raged on in Methodism, and especially in its conferences, key Evangelicals friendly to Methodism and yet staunchly attached to the Church began to die. Samuel Walker died in 1761 and in an ironic twist most of his congregation left for dissent. Walker had retired from his living in 1760 and his successor, Charles Pye, is said to have declared that "my pulpit so stinks of Calvinism that not a century will purge it."⁵¹³ Ward notes that Pye "successfully purged his congregation, many of whom removed themselves to a disused cockpit for the fellowship to which they were accustomed."⁵¹⁴ By 1770 the congregation had

⁵¹¹ Harris described a proposed meeting with the Wesley brothers and Haweis, and from the 1763 Conference, "a motion was made to meet some of the clergy and two of the Moravian bishops for union. A meeting was settled next week with Madan, Haweis, and the two brothers— John and Charles Wesley." *Works*, 10:296. It is not clear from Wesley's journal for the week following the conference that such a meeting took place, however.

⁵¹² *Works*, 10:295.

⁵¹³ John Wesley, *Journals and Diaries V (1765-1775)*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, Vol 22 in the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 59, fn. 63 (September 4, 1766).

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

become Congregationalists. Wesley wrote in 1766 that he preached in Truro and was “in hopes, when Mr. Walker died, the enmity in those who were called ‘his people’ would have died also.” He found that this had not come to pass. According to his journal, “they still look upon *us* as rank heretics.”⁵¹⁵ In the late 1780s these animosities seem to have waned.

Within two years of Walker’s death, Grimshaw passed away in April of 1763, just before the conference where he was going to be named the successor to the Wesleys. The loss of these Evangelicals cannot be underestimated, for their deaths left Methodism, and John Wesley, increasingly isolated from the Church of England. The loss of these two men in particular, left Charles with fewer allies in his crusade to save Methodism from dissent. Death, it seems, was as much a factor in the gradual separation of Wesley and his Evangelical colleagues as was anything else. As new leaders began to rise up within their respect camps, camps that began to look increasingly dissimilar, the divide between the two parties expanded almost naturally.

The ecclesiastical issues related to the ordination of lay preachers or their administration of the Sacraments kept surfacing in Wesleyan Methodism and was discussed in conferences intermittently from 1755 through 1764. These were issues that dealt with the very place of Wesleyan Methodism in relation to the Church of England. In both 1755 and 1764, the Evangelical clergy were keenly aware of the debates of conference and even engaged in them. Whether or not the larger Church had any interest in these proceedings is hard to tell.⁵¹⁶ These

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., Sept. 4, 1766.

⁵¹⁶ It is important not to imagine that Methodist conferences were front-page news, or that they made lasting impressions outside the organizational structures of Wesleyan Methodism. The tendency to make both John Wesley

were small meetings whose primary engagement was the placement of Methodist itinerants. Most of the time the only clergy presence in these meetings was that of the Wesley brothers, and after 1755 Charles took less and less interest in the meetings. Charles only stayed at the 1755 meeting until issues related to the Church of England had been discussed and settled. He left immediately afterward, having evaded the opportunity to participate in the mundane matters of Methodist mechanics.

As the years went by, however, Charles Wesley's venom toward any dissenting idea or would-be dissenter became more and more vitriolic. Ayling argues that this vitriolic High Churchmanship, along with his attachment to Lady Huntingdon, Whitefield, and other leading Evangelicals known for their moderate Calvinism, created a context in which the lay preachers began to doubt his attachments to Methodism and his commitment to an Arminian gospel.⁵¹⁷ Regardless of Charles's supposed affinity to Calvinism, his rising fury against the threat of Methodist dissent corresponded with a lessening degree of interest in the Wesleyan Methodist scheme among Evangelical Anglicans.⁵¹⁸

Some Evangelicals continued to show interest in the Methodist conferences in the early 1760s. Wesley read a letter from Grimshaw at the 1760 meeting saying that the Methodist system

and his conference meetings larger than they really were is an historiographical error that Wesley scholarship is prone to encourage.

⁵¹⁷ Ayling, *John Wesley*, 232.

⁵¹⁸ For a thorough description of Charles's anti-Calvinism, see Geoffrey Wainwright, "Charles Wesley and Calvinism" in *Charles Wesley: Life, Literature, and Legacy*, Kenneth G.C. Newport and Ted A. Campbell, eds., (Peterborough: Epworth, 2007), for a description of Charles's anthropological and scriptural arguments against Calvinism, especially in his hymns.

as it had been set up was not dissenting, but that ordination of the preachers and celebrating the Sacraments were schismatic acts.⁵¹⁹ Not one of the Evangelical Anglicans in regular ministry was in attendance at the conference, although Evangelical Anglicanism was alive and well in Bristol.⁵²⁰

The 1764 conference appears to have been a last-ditch effort on the part of the Evangelical clergy as a group to keep Wesleyan Methodism within the bounds of the Church. They show little interest in conference after this date, and having been discouraged by the arrogance of Wesley's lay preachers, held a meeting of their own to organize the regular Evangelical efforts. This does not mean that the Evangelicals were disinterested in Wesley's Methodism or unaffected by its growing irregularity. That same year, a number of the lay preachers received ordination at the hand of "Bishop" Erasmus, whom Heitzenrater describes as "a purported Orthodox heirarch" who had also ordained Wesley's assistant John Jones. Heitzenrater claims that there were twelve lay preachers who were ordained by Erasmus.⁵²¹

Telford wrote that six of the names were "exposed in Lloyd's Evening Post," and that "the sentence [against the irregular ordinations] had been required by the Rev. Messrs. Madan, Romaine, and Shirley. 'Mr. Charles, Dr. Dodd, De Coetlogon (the colleague of Madan at the Lock Chapel)," were nonetheless wise enough to keep their names out of print."⁵²² This litany of

⁵¹⁹ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 165; and *Works*, 10:271, fn. 950.

⁵²⁰ James Brown of the Bristol Grammar School and a leading Evangelical among the Bristol and Somerset clergy, as well as Richard Hart at St. George's, Kingswood, Bristol, were both in Bristol at this time. St. George's had been built by Evangelicals intent on reaching the coal miners of the area.

⁵²¹ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 232.

⁵²² See *Letters* (Telford), 4:290-291 (To Six Preachers, February 27, 1765). See also Wesley's letter to Charles

Evangelical clergy, mainly from London where the ordinations took place, included many of the leading Evangelicals of the day. Rack notes that Wesley suffered “much embarrassment” for the actions of these preachers and that a special conference in January 1765 agreed that the men had “acted contrary to the Word of God and the duty they owe to their ministers and their brethren.”⁵²³

The implications of these irregular ordinations were felt throughout evangelicalism. Newton, in his attempts at the time to gain holy orders, was rejected in part because of them. According to Hindmarsh, Archbishop Secker counseled against ordaining anyone associated with Methodism because of these ordinations. Secker had advised John Gilbert, the Archbishop of York “to reject an application for priest’s orders from the Moravian and former Methodist lay preacher Francis Okely, and he had been displeased that certain other Methodists were being ordained by a ‘a pretended’ Greek Bishop.”⁵²⁴ Ironically, Newton thought for a time to become a Methodist itinerant, although he was later swayed to seek orders again by Haweis and Crook.⁵²⁵

About a month after the controversy over the irregular ordinations, six of the lay preachers requested to be placed back upon their routes as local preachers. Wesley’s reply, written from

on January 11, 1765, 4:287, and his two letters to the Printer of the *St. James’s Chronicle*, February 5 and February 10, 1765, 4:280-289.

⁵²³ *Works*, 10:302.

⁵²⁴ Hindmarsh, *John Newton and the English Evangelical Tradition*, 91.

⁵²⁵ Haweis may have also been affected by the controversy surrounding the “Greek Bishop.” About the same time, Secker ignored his appeals when Haweis was threatened with expulsion from St. Mary Magdalene, Oxford. Crook, it should be noted, may have placed Newton’s earlier efforts to gain holy orders in jeopardy. See Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, 90.

Norwich, is short and to the point. Madan, Romaine, and “the good-natured” Shirley had continued to pressure Wesley about the irregularity of these ordinations. Wesley wrote to the preachers that these clergy were “almost out of patience with me for not disowning you on the house-top.” These London Evangelicals were keeping Wesley in what he described as “good behaviour” and he was “obliged to move with all possible circumspection.” He ends his letter saying that if he were to allow them to preach in his connexion so soon he would be in “hotter fire than ever.”⁵²⁶ Heitzenrater notes that during this controversy that Wesley “was barely being kept in check by political pressure from some of the clergy who were friendly to Methodism.”⁵²⁷ The ability of Evangelicals to keep Wesley in check would soon come to an end as political pressures forced them to distance themselves from Wesley and Wesley himself would finally give up on his plan for an evangelical union.

⁵²⁶ *Letters (Telford)* 4: 291 (to Six Preachers, February 27, 1765).

⁵²⁷ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 233.

CHAPTER EIGHT

POLITICAL CONVERGENCES, PREDESTINARIAN OXONIAMS, ANGLICAN HEGEMONY, AND IRREGULAR CASUALTIES

Almighty God, who shewest to them that be in error, the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness: Grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Collect for the third Sunday after Easter

In his book on the interplay of religion and political culture in Britain and Ireland during the long eighteenth-century, David Hempton highlights the issue of Anglican adaptation in the latter third of the century.⁵²⁸ Scholars of Methodism often overlook this slow change that took place on account of a shifting religious marketplace. The Church of England was begrudgingly entering an era of pluralism. With this adjustment, many Anglicans attitudes changed toward those who continued to dissent from the Church's model of governance and theological breadth, or who outright attacked the Church's hegemonic standing within the *ancien regime* of the post-Restoration period. These two groups could often be seen together, but the Church's reaction during the reign of George III to the continuing existence of dissent, irregularity, Methodism, and liberalism can be seen as akin to the western American frontier model of "circling the wagons." Continuing assaults on the Church's hegemony by those who wanted to end subscription

⁵²⁸ See Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (New York: Cambridge, 1996) especially chapter 1, "The Church of England: a great English consensus?" Hempton concludes the chapter by stating that "however vigourously Established Churchmen defended their interests, they were no match for the corrosive forces of religious pluralism, class conflict and state welfarism. The establishment principle miraculously survived, but its social foundations were swept away" (24).

for admittance to the universities and even holy orders, the Feather's Lane petition, the Bangorian controversy, and anti-trinitarianism especially coming out of Cambridge, shook the ecclesiastical landscape. The reaction of the newly ascended Tories and their Church allies began to turn the Anglican big tent model of an all-inclusive national Church with an outward focus toward an inward one which saw the advancement of internal cohesion, a strengthened orthodoxy, and rising High Churchmanship.⁵²⁹

Hempton describes events that hinge upon realities that grew to maturity later in the eighteenth century. His arguments describe the larger political context in which the Church participated. Yet it is not difficult to see that the isolationism that he describes began to be felt first by those already on the fringes of Anglican life as the Church reacted against perceived threats and positioned itself to defend its place in English society. Hempton asserts that "by the end of the eighteenth century the popular basis for a consensual Anglicanism was under threat from a formidable range of pressures" and that, in response, the Church "increasingly turned its back on the national consensus it had worked so hard to create, and become more wedded to establishment values on the one hand and isolation from some of the major currents in European religion on the other." What was coming into being was "a more competitive and pluralistic religious environment" and one in which threats to Anglican hegemony were taken very seriously.⁵³⁰ William Gibson highlighted this same defensiveness: "by the second half of the century militant High Churchmanship had evolved into a movement for doctrinal orthodoxy that

⁵²⁹ See Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland*, 14.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

was mobilised to defend the State from Dissent and radicalism.”⁵³¹ High Churchmanship had come back to the mainstream with the ascension of George III in 1760.⁵³²

Within this context of ecclesiastical shifts, the irregularities of Wesleyan Methodism—although ironically led by two conservative Tories who applauded certain aspects of the Church’s turn toward isolation—became some of the casualties of this political paradigm.⁵³³ Wesleyan Methodists with their irregular model were not banished from the cultural scene, but they were gradually left more and more to their own devices and treated as other dissenting groups. The Evangelicals with their own status under suspicion within the established Church began finally in the 1760s and early 1770s to find connection to the irregularities of Wesley’s ecclesial subculture too threatening to their own survival. The expulsion of six Oxford evangelicals from St. Edmund Hall in 1768, the growth of Tory influence and Church exclusion, debates among Wesleyans and Evangelicals over parish boundaries, theological controversies, and finally the outright rejection of Wesley’s overtures toward evangelical unity, mark this decade as the end of what should be seen from 1740 to 1770 as a period of non-partisan evangelical revival and cooperation in England.⁵³⁴

⁵³¹ Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832*, 2.

⁵³² For a good example of the newly re-risen Tory political viewpoint under George III see George Horne, *The Christian King: A Sermon preached before the University of Oxford, at St Mary’s on Friday, January 30, 1761*. See also Wesley’s reply to Horne, “A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Horne,” in *Works* 11:437-458. Horne had described the “Tabernacle” and the “Foundry” as sectarian and Antinomian. His comment was meant to defend “the Catholic doctors of the ancient church.” It is interesting to note that Horne saw the radical elements of the Revival in stark contrast to the Catholic nature of the Church of England. Wesley, although friendly toward Horne, had to respond to his own inclusion in this blanket statement. Cragg notes that “Wesley’s respect for Horne remained undiminished to the end” (*Ibid.*, 439).

⁵³³ See *Works*, 22:164 and fn. 13.

⁵³⁴ See especially Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* and his chapter on Wesley and the Evangelicals where Baker highlights the end of Wesley’s overtures toward unity following near-total silence to his 1768 unification

The evangelical fraternity of the early years of the Revival gave way to the pressures and social contexts in which the later more formal structures of a Methodist Church, the Evangelical Party within the Church of England, and a dissenting Connexion under Lady Huntingdon would appear.⁵³⁵

The year 1770 is not a watershed moment in and of itself, but the culmination of watershed moments, such as the 1768 St. Edmund expulsions, and their aftermaths. Nor should 1770 be viewed as a date after which Wesley had no contact with Evangelicals in the Church. What it should be regarded as is a general date after which the trajectories of these two evangelical groups can be seen distinctly to diverge. Wesleyan Methodism, unlike the variety explicitly under Lady Huntingdon, did not have a set date in which it officially left the Church as a whole or their evangelical colleagues. There are arguments for claiming that Wesleyan Methodism left the Anglican fold in 1744 with the first Conference, 1784 with Wesley's ordinations, or with the 1795 Methodist Plan of Pacification. Even Wesley's death in 1791 could be seen as a proper end to Methodism's attachment to her ecclesiastical parent. Each claim, however, is fraught with the difficulties of creating a clear picture out of an historically messy reality.

This chapter will look at the political realities of the 1760s and early 1770s to see how they helped to create a widening divergence between Wesley and his Evangelical colleagues within the parish structures of the Church. Specifically, it will analyze the effects of Anglican hegemony and

letter.

⁵³⁵ Lady Huntingdon would dissent following pressure from the Church over her chapels in 1779. See Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 285; and Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, 202. Rack notes: "Secession at once lost Lady Huntingdon the support of Evangelicals who had acted as her chaplains, and helped to precipitate a hardening of their feelings against 'irregularities' for fear of further schism" (*Reasonable Enthusiast*, 285).

exclusivism in the face of perceived threats and how those challenges ultimately contributed to the parting of ways between Wesley and the Evangelicals. The reader should not think that politics alone made for this separation of evangelicals, but that taken together with theological and ecclesiastical challenges, made the connection between these two groups too difficult to maintain.

Much attention will be given in this chapter to the expulsion of six evangelicals from St. Edmund Hall for “methodistical behaviour,” and the political and ecclesiastical fall-out that ensued. Ironically, the six students were not connected to Wesley; they were theologically Calvinistic. Yet the expulsion of six Calvinists during the reign of George III further relegated John Wesley to the fringes of Anglican life. The intertwined nature of evangelicalism meant that popular opinion and ecclesiastical censure were felt by the movement as though it were a homogenous whole. By the 1760s, it was the fringe that most felt the repercussions of political turmoil.

The prevailing irregularity of Wesleyan Methodism, with its army of lay itinerant ministers, connected it to the same irregularities that triggered the Oxford expulsions. Since holy orders often, if not almost always, depended on the completion of a degree from either Oxford or Cambridge, evangelical expulsions from Oxford triggered fear through the regular Evangelicals. These expulsions can be seen as a part of a nearly two decade long move to relegate evangelical influence within the university. Lady Huntingdon, in response to the expulsions, created an

academy at Trevecca where she required her pupils to participate in irregularity.⁵³⁶ Many Evangelicals looked to Cambridge as the sole path to traditional orders after 1768.⁵³⁷

The expulsion of six Calvinistic evangelicals from St. Edmund Hall in the Spring of 1768 was the result of official censure and personal politics. It was the culmination of efforts, like the removal of Thomas Haweis from St. Mary Magdalene, Oxford just a decade earlier, to rein in fringe elements within the university—from enthusiasts on the one hand to deistic or unitarian impulses on the other. And while Oxford had been the cradle of Wesleyan Methodism, home of evangelical luminaries such as the Wesleys, Whitefield, and Walker, the late 1760s witnessed a change in the political climate that saw a move from toleration to exclusivism played out explicitly with the expulsion of these six students.

No scholarly book-length study of the trial has been written. W. Reginald Ward included a section on the topic in his history of Oxford in the eighteenth century and J. S. Reynolds included a slightly larger section on the trial and its aftermath in his book on Evangelicals at Oxford. S.L. Ollard, at the beginning of the twentieth century, wrote a small book on the six expelled students, although from a decidedly biased vantage point.⁵³⁸ Ollard provides the most comprehensive treatment of the personalities involved in the expulsion controversy, and attempts to follow the

⁵³⁶ Faith Cook, *Selina, Countess of Huntingdon* (Carlisle: Banner of Trust, 2001), 243-253, and Harding, *Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, 90.

⁵³⁷ In 1767, Evangelical George Burnett founded the Elland Clerical Society to assist Evangelical ordinands. The society in its early years directed their students to Cambridge where they knew some tutors who would share their views. See Hardin, *Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, 88-89.

⁵³⁸ S. L. Ollard, *The Six Students of St. Edmund Hall Expelled from the University of Oxford in 1768 with a Note on the Authorities for Their Story* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 1911).

characters through their respective careers. He succinctly summarized the charges against the six students when he wrote that “the crux of the matter lay in the charge of being Methodists, and, therefore, by implication, enemies to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England.”⁵³⁹

Evangelical Entanglement

Most of the material available on the expulsions comes from polemical pieces written between 1768 and 1770 by commentators just after the expulsions. One piece, *Priestcraft Defended*, a Baptist work was published on both sides of the Atlantic well into the nineteenth century. The expulsions touched some sort of nerve. In many of the pieces written after the expulsions, the authors touch on anything from arguments over the Homilies or the role of subscription, to the historic place of Calvinism within the Church.⁵⁴⁰ Within each of them, however, is the lurking question of the place of evangelicalism within the Establishment.

The expulsions were particularly felt in the evangelical world because of the evangelical fraternity. These six students, although not connected to Wesley, were distinctly connected to other Evangelical clergymen and Lady Huntingdon.⁵⁴¹ According to Richard Hill, a letter was read at the court itself from the Evangelical Thomas Haweis, in which Erasmus Middleton, one of the six students, was described as “a dear child of God.” This was, according to Hill, met with

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 13-14.

⁵⁴⁰ Richard Hill was by far the most prolific writer during the controversy. He staunchly defended a Reformed view of the Church of England and her doctrinal standards, especially against the High Church view of Thomas Nowell. See especially Hill, *Pietas Oxoniensis: or, A Full and Impartial Account of the Expulsion of Six Students from St. Edmund Hall, Oxford; With a Dedication to the Right Honourable the Earl of Litchfield, Chancellor of that University by a master of arts of the University of Oxford* (London: Printed for G. Keith, et. al., 1768).

⁵⁴¹ Harding, *Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, 88-89

opprobrium by those gathered.⁵⁴² In terms of the entanglement of Evangelical Anglicanism with the trial, this mention of Haweis, one familiar to Oxonians, simply added another clergyman to the list of those associated with the trial including John Newton, John Fletcher, Henry Venn, Joseph Townsend, and William Davies. Hill argued convincingly that these Evangelicals were implicitly tried by the court alongside the six students.⁵⁴³ This Evangelical entanglement, although not explicitly to include the Wesley brothers, would implicitly include all “Methodists.” The focus of the trial and the mention of Evangelicals during it implicated anyone suspected of taking stances that somehow challenged the polity and doctrine of the Church.⁵⁴⁴

The trial, as Ollard describes it, was a “strange tragedy.”⁵⁴⁵ The university would look back with reservations on the expulsions of the six, according to Ward, but in 1768 these students met the full fury of a public trial and the wrath of a seemingly spurned tutor able to tap into the uneasiness with which the establishment viewed evangelical piety. Reading the charges now, which included among others lay preaching, extemporaneous prayer, and an insufficient knowledge of classical languages, the modern reader is struck by their seemingly benign nature. Although personal issues cannot be disregarded within the politics of a small academic community, the larger politics of the day put these seemingly inoffensive charges in a much more malevolent light.

⁵⁴² Hill, *Pietas Oxoniensis*, 10-11.

⁵⁴³ Ibid, 18. See also Hill’s arguments about the legality of society meetings and opposition to evangelicals in Kent, *Pietas Oxoniensis*, 20-22.

⁵⁴⁴ See Hill, *A letter to the Rev. Dr. Adams of Shrewsbury: occasioned by the publication of his sermon, preached against the Rev. Mr. Romaine: entitled A test of true and false doctrines. To which is now added, a dedication ... As also a letter from Mr. Romaine to Dr. Adams. By the author of Pietas Oxoniensis.* 2nd ed., rev. (London, 1770), especially 51-52.

⁵⁴⁵ Ollard, *The Six Students of St. Edmund Hall*, 30.

Lay preaching, a charge brought against four of the six students, was a challenge not to the traditional Anglican designation of prophets and priests, but to the structures of the Church and State. Within the political context in which the trial took place, cries to bring about a breakdown in Anglican political hegemony were becoming louder. “In Georgian England, as much as in the seventeenth century, politics was a branch of theology.”⁵⁴⁶ The two cannot be separated. Political acts were theology and *vis versa*. Although in the early part of the century, lay preaching and itinerancy were easily connected to the actions of political radicalism akin to Cromwell and the parliamentarians of the previous century, and thus a challenge to the entirety of the *ancien régime* of State, Church, and Aristocracy, the actions of these ecclesiastical mavericks in the latter part of the century were seen as a direct challenge to the Church, and its place within the structure of that tri-part schema.⁵⁴⁷

This shift signified a distinct difference between the politics of dissent in the early part of the century. In the early part of the century, challenges to the Church were thought to test its right to exist as an episcopal structure with its catholic heritage intact within the Anglican *via media*. The perceived challenge of dissent in the latter part of the century, especially under George III, was a perceived threat to the church’s right to claim to be a truly national church under which all subjects of the Crown would identify. Within this context, lay preaching and anti-subscription efforts could be seen in the same light—as efforts to unseat the Church from its preferred pedestal.

⁵⁴⁶Gibson, *Church of England 1688-1832*, 5.

⁵⁴⁷ For specific discussion of Wesley and the *ancien régime*, see Hempton, *Religion of the People*, especially his chapter “John Wesley and England’s Ancien Régime,” 77-90.

The Context

As has been noted, the accounts of the trial and what led up to it are distinctly biased and written within the context of a propaganda war. Ollard remains the most comprehensive source for information on the trial, although most of his information is drawn from Hill's polemical pieces, especially *Pietas Oxoniensis*. Hill's work was a sharply-worded piece decrying the university and its leadership. His work promoted an exclusively Calvinistic interpretation of the Thirty-Nine Articles and the English Reformation. Because of its increasingly aggressive tone, Hill's polemical works would later become a cause of scandal.⁵⁴⁸ Hill, as the usual proponent of decorum, came through in these particular writings as distinctly venomous and sectarian.

Hill begins *Pietas Oxoniensis* with a disclaimer "to acquaint the reader, that I am a member of the Established Church, into whose communion I was in my infancy baptized, and for whose doctrine and discipline I still profess the highest veneration."⁵⁴⁹ This disclaimer shows the extent to which the trial forced the question of ecclesial loyalty. It also gives a glimpse into an ecclesiastical and political climate in which lines were being more firmly drawn.

The students came from various parts of England; five of them intended to go into holy orders. They were a part of a larger re-birth of Methodism among the students of the university after the initial student-led efforts of the 1720s and 1730s became dominated by town rather than gown. The Wesley brothers' initial efforts to start the Methodist Revival among the students of

⁵⁴⁸ Sidney, *Life of Sir R. Hill*, 112

⁵⁴⁹ Richard Hill, *Pietas Oxoniensis*, 7-8. I use the second edition of the work due to the fact that Hill greatly expanded his initial publication with this second edition published the same year.

Oxford did not survive long after their departure for colonial Georgia. Oxford Methodism after the 1730s was populated primarily by residents of Oxford rather than by students from the colleges. However, evangelicalism was not entirely bereft from the academic cloisters. Evangelical leaders would emerge from Oxford throughout the century after the initial revival had subsided. The new Methodists of Oxford in the 1760s, however, were not to be found under the tutelage of the Wesleys, but under the influence of Evangelicals such as Edward Stillingfleet and Thomas Haweis, regular clergymen within the Church.

Seymour notes in his biography of Lady Huntingdon that during the 1760s a shift had occurred and “considerable attention was paid to the subject of religion by many students in the University of Oxford.”⁵⁵⁰ Both Lady Huntingdon and Whitefield were aware of this newest evangelical impulse at Oxford, and Lady Huntingdon sent news of it in a letter to Stillingfleet. In the letter she mentions prayer-meetings among the students: “I am really rejoiced that so many at the Universities are determined to be on the Lord’s side. May they be kept faithful and steady!”⁵⁵¹ Likewise, Whitefield described many students during this period in distinct evangelical language as “awakened to the knowledge of the truth” and “earnestly learning Christ.”⁵⁵² Other Evangelical leaders visited Oxford in the 1760s to find students who had embraced the evangelical message. Reynolds wrote that “early in 1761, Samuel Walker again visited Oxford, where ‘he met a group of

⁵⁵⁰ Seymour, *The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, 226.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

promising young men preparing for orders, for whom he was at pains to draw up some instructions.”⁵⁵³

Within this context it is easy to see that the six students expelled from St. Edmund Hall were part of a growing movement, although there is no record of other evangelical expulsions from the university in such a public manner.⁵⁵⁴ The six were obviously meant to be examples to others among their peers, some of whom had already been sent away from the University in more discrete fashion. One of those was Matthew Powley, who had gone up to Queen’s College in 1760 and lost his academic preferment because of his association with Haweis, then a curate at St. Mary Magdalene.⁵⁵⁵ The trial and expulsion of the St. Edmund students was anything but discrete. Gibson calls the episode, “the highest expression of the universities’ determination to defend orthodoxy.”⁵⁵⁶

The expulsion of the six St. Edmund students took place at a time when an ordained Evangelical presence was at a lull in Oxford, a distinct moment of Evangelical weakness in the university between two periods of relative strength. The later period would begin in the 1780s, ironically at St. Edmund Hall as the Hall would become Evangelical-friendly under the leadership

⁵⁵³ J. S. Reynolds, *The Evangelicals at Oxford 1735-1871: A Record of an Unchronicled Movement with the Record Extended to 1905* (Oxford: Marcham Manor Press, 1975), 30.

⁵⁵⁴ Gibson notes in *Church of England 1688-1832* that “The colleges and universities regularly took formal action against the heterodox: in 1730 Magdalen College, Oxford expelled three students for Deism and in 1745 the Convocation of Oxford expelled Selwyn for blasphemy,” (139-140). What was so exceptional about the expulsions of the students at St. Edmund’s Hall was their publicity.

⁵⁵⁵ Reynolds, *Evangelicals at Oxford*, 30.

⁵⁵⁶ Gibson, *Church of England 1688-1832*, 140.

of Isaac Crouch and Daniel Wilson. This lull was caused by the departure of Haweis, Stillingfleet, and Joseph Jane from St. Timothy's in 1763.

Haweis, who served at the center of Oxford, was a lightning rod during his short curacy. His ministry began like that of most other Evangelicals. His attempts to gain holy orders met episcopal concerns over his theology. Bishop Lavington, a staunch anti-Methodist, rejected the suitability of Haweis' three clerical signatories and refused to recommend Haweis to the Bishop of Oxford, Thomas Secker, later Archbishop of Canterbury. The three signatories were beneficed clergyman, but were known Evangelicals including Samuel Walker of Truro, John Penrose of Penryn, and Thomas Michell of Veryan. Others signatories were found and Haweis was ordained in October of 1757, but his clashes with episcopal leadership were far from over. Secker, now Archbishop, had been replaced as the Bishop of Oxford by Dr. John Hume, who would take steps to have Haweis removed by 1762.

Hume's removal of Haweis took place after Haweis had already earned the ire of Oxford. Under his leadership, St. Mary Magdalene was seen as notoriously evangelical and was declared out-of-bounds to Oxford undergraduates. Authorities from the University would sweep through the congregation and remove undergraduates who dared attend services. Haweis often lost his hat to pranksters on the streets and had rocks thrown through the windows of the church during his sermons. His ministry was an embarrassment to many in Oxford, but his removal by the bishop was just a precursor to the challenges Evangelicals would face at Oxford throughout the rest of the

decade. Charles Smyth, writing about Haweis' departure from St. Mary, Magdalene wrote that "it was evident that there was a storm brewing over Oxford and in 1768 it broke."⁵⁵⁷

The relationship between Evangelicalism and the University of Oxford both before and after the 1768 expulsions needs more explanation. This unique relationship changed with the 1768 expulsions. After the expulsions, the Evangelicals at Oxford held a distinctly different ecclesiastical outlook. The irregularity of the earlier period did not remain a characteristic of the ascendant Evangelical Party that would finally have a permanent place within the regular structures of the Church of England or the University of Oxford. Irregular Evangelicalism was not the form of Evangelicalism that came back to Oxford under persons like Isaac Crouch. J. S. Reynolds' description of Crouch is key to the pre and post-1768 difference. Reynolds describes Crouch as a reserved academic. Quoting the *Christian Observer*, Reynolds describes Crouch's "meekness of spirit, his retired habits, his strict regard to discipline, his unwearied assiduity, his unimpeachable piety and holiness, his constant enforcement of Church doctrine and principles in all their spiritual savour."⁵⁵⁸ According to Reynolds, it was Crouch's conservatism that "by slow degrees" earned the respect of Oxonians.⁵⁵⁹ The concept of "slow degrees" was markedly different from the passionate and yet erratic nature of the earlier evangelists.

Not all Evangelicals connected to Oxford were irregular before the expulsions, and the lull in Evangelical leadership by 1768 was not caused by any effort to rid the University of irregularity.

⁵⁵⁷ Smyth, *Simeon and Church Order*, 209.

⁵⁵⁸ Reynolds, *Evangelicals at Oxford*, 60.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Between the 1730s, when Whitefield and Wesley were active as members of the “Holy Club,” and the late 1760s, Haweis, Jane, and Stillingfleet had regular ministries within the confines of Oxford. Their absence in 1768, however, left the six St. Edmund students without the benefit of Evangelical leaders in Oxford to aid their defense.

The Trial

The Shaver, or barber, as he was known throughout his sermon *Priestcraft Defended*, began his text with a description of the trial and expulsion of the six students as it was said to appear in a local newspaper.

On Friday last six students belonging to Edmund-Hall were expelled the university, after an hearing of several hours, before Mr. Vice-Chancellor, and some of the Heads of Houses for holding Methodistical tenets, and taking upon them to pray, read, and expound the scriptures, and sing hymns in a private house. The [Head] of the [Hall] defended their doctrines from the thirty-nine articles of the established church, and spoke in the highest terms of the piety, and exemplariness of their lives; but his motion was overruled, and sentence pronounced against them.⁵⁶⁰

The author had seen nothing wrong with praying, reading, expounding the scriptures, and singing hymns. And, after reading Hill’s *Pietas Oxoniensis*, he claimed to have been inspired to take up lay-preaching. Shaver claimed to want to prove that preaching was not something only for the elites of society. As his pseudonym indicates, he was not a gentleman, nor is it likely that he was educated. He claimed to see “the honours of my family cast down into the puddle by the arrogance of

⁵⁶⁰ A Shaver, *Priestcraft Defended: A Sermon Occassioned by the Expulsion of Six Young Gentlemen from the University of Oxford, for Praying, Reading, and Expounding the Scriptures* (London and Boston: 1771), 5-6, where the author has taken the quotation “from St. James’s Chronicle, for Thursday, March 17, 1768. No. 1099. Printed by Henry Baldwin, at the Printing-Office, White Friars, Fleet Street.”

Oxonian priests,” and decided to defend his family’s honor by taking up the very activities that led to the Oxford expulsions. This response to the classist nature of the trial and its accusations against the students was not common, but indicated one of the many ways in which the trial far exceeded the expectations of its prosecutors.⁵⁶¹

According to evangelical authors, the trial appears to have been a circus.⁵⁶² Depending on the bias of the author, reports of the behavior of the spectators and treatment of the accused during the trial appear almost to describe entirely different events. Regardless of the behavior of the spectators, a full-blown trial at Oxford was unique in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Initially, there was not supposed to be a trial. The head of the Hall, Dr. Dixon, resolved upon “mild measures” against the irregularities of the six students. One of the students, Thomas Jones, had been called before the Vice-Principal months before the trial for preaching in the fields and appears to have been unaware that he was in violation of any laws. He appears to have asked the Vice-Principal at some point whether there was any harm in preaching. The Vice-Principal is said to have claimed that “God knows; I don’t know that there is any harm in it; it is very well for people to instruct their neighbours, provided there is no enthusiasm in it.”⁵⁶³ The Vice-Principal would later claim to have been deceived by the nature of the meetings that Mr. Jones had been attending.⁵⁶⁴ At the trial Higson asserted that the six students were not only incapable of passing

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., iv.

⁵⁶² See especially Hill’s *Pietas Oxoniensis*, 18.

⁵⁶³ Ibid, 23-24.

⁵⁶⁴ Ollard, *The Six Students of St. Edmund Hall*, 8-9. And see Hill’s *Pietas Oxoniensis*, 2nd ed., 23; and Nowell’s

the language requirements of the Hall, but had been insubordinate. Higson's relationship to the students is complicated. Personality seems to have had as much to do with its breakdown as did any break in University policy.

Following Hill's suggestion in *Goliath Slain*, Ollard acquiesces to the theory that the trial was ordered by outside influences, specifically the influence of Bishop Hume. Hill describes "certain intimations of what was wished to be done were received from a certain quarter."⁵⁶⁵ Ollard interprets this "malign influence here hinted" as Bishop Hume, "the Bishop of Salisbury (formerly of Oxford), an ardent anti-Methodist."⁵⁶⁶ Hume was the same bishop who had removed Haweis from St. Mary Magdalene, but who had left Oxford in 1766. In his work on Charles Simeon, Charles Smyth also believed that episcopal pressure was asserted to make an example of the evangelicals who were ultimately kicked out of St. Edmund Hall.⁵⁶⁷ Thomas Nowell in his reply to *Pietas Oxoniensis*, implicates Jones and Middleton for the rumor, and in defense of the university wrote, "I am fully persuaded that the Vice-Chancellor was not pushed on by the violence of others, but urged by an affectionate regard for the honour and welfare of the University."⁵⁶⁸

Answer, 1st ed., 146.

⁵⁶⁵ Ollard, *The Six Students of St. Edmund Hall*, 16.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Smyth, *Charles Simeon and Church Order*, 211.

⁵⁶⁸ Thomas Nowell, *An answer to a pamphlet, entitled Pietas oxoniensis, in a letter to the author. Wherein the grounds of the expulsion of six members from St. Edmund-Hall are set forth; and the Doctrines of the Church of England, and its first Reformers, fully considered, and vindicated. By Thomas Nowell, D. D. Principal of St. Mary Hall, and Public Orator of the University of Oxford. occasioned by the Reply of the same Author* (Oxford: 1769), 196.

The possibility of episcopal involvement aside, Ward argued that the significance of the trial and its judgment was the influence of the newly-ascendant Tories. Ward noted that the “significance of the judgment was that all the judges (apart from the vice-chancellor, but including Nowell) were prominent among the growing body of Oxford courtiers of Tory origin.”⁵⁶⁹ It is this connection with the Tories of the period that gives the trial significance. The Tories and their High Church allies during the reign of George III were behind efforts described earlier to rein in on dissent, irregularity, and liberalism on a national scale. Interestingly, the prosecutors of the trial were of the same political ilk as John and Charles Wesley.

The Students

For all the attention that the trial drew, the six students were essentially pawns of larger political and theological debates brewing around the issues of church loyalty, dissent, and irregularity. Samuel Johnson was not impressed with the students. He said of the students that “a cow is a very good animal in the field, but we turn her out of the garden.”⁵⁷⁰ Among modern interpreters, Ollard is the most interested in the lives of the students themselves. His summary statement on the students says much about the place of irregularity within the church as the century progressed. He claimed that unlike their judges, “the paths of the Six Students did not

⁵⁶⁹ *Work*, 22:164, fn. 13.

⁵⁷⁰ Ollard, *The Six Students of St. Edmund Hall*, 31.

lead to positions of dignity and ease.”⁵⁷¹ Only three of the students had successful careers after the expulsions; one because he was a man of means by birth, and the other two, Erasmus Middleton and Thomas Jones, as the only students who gained holy orders and a regular ministry within the Church.

Most of the students were associated with leading figures in the Evangelical Revival both Calvinist and Arminian. The importance of a regular ministry, however, can be seen in their earliest contacts with Evangelical leaders. Jones was closely connected to John Newton after they began writing to one another in 1765. In Newton’s early letters to Jones, Newton attempted to convey the importance of a regular ministry within the Church of England. Newton’s style was not confrontational, and he appeared open to the possibility that Jones would have an irregular ministry, but one outside the Church. Newton wrote, “if you have a desire to enter into the Established Church, endeavour to keep your zeal within moderate bounds, and avoid every thing that might unnecessarily clog you admission with difficulties.”⁵⁷² Newton specifically points out to Jones the need to “avoid what looks like preaching.”⁵⁷³

There are five letters to Jones from Newton ranging from 1765 to 1772. Both before and after his time at Oxford, Jones made Olney his home. Likely through the influence of Lord Dartmouth, Newton’s patron, Jones was ordained in the Church and became a curate in Buckinghamshire at Clifton Raynes, a village a mile from Olney. He was ordained by the Bishop of

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

⁵⁷² John Newton, *Cardophonia*, 51.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

Lincoln, John Green, who had also ordained Newton. Jones' curacy at Clifton Raynes was uneventful, and it appears that his time with Newton and at Oxford impressed upon him the importance of a regular ministry. He is said to be one of the earliest proponents of Sunday School.⁵⁷⁴ And unlike his earlier staunch disdain for Arminians, he maintained a friendship with both Calvinist and Arminian Evangelicals even after the controversies that erupted following the publication of Wesley's 1770 Conference Minutes.

James Matthews was connected to John Fletcher of Madeley, a staunch Arminian and defender of Wesley, and after his expulsion from Oxford he and Joseph Shipman were "received by Lady Huntingdon in a house just taken by her on Mount Ephraim at Tunbridge Wells."⁵⁷⁵ Shortly after their arrival, Lady Huntingdon sent them to her newly-founded school at Trevecca. Rack notes that after the events at St. Edmund Hall in 1768 that both "Wesley and Lady Huntingdon had increasing difficulty placing their protégés in Oxford."⁵⁷⁶ Kingswood and Trevecca were their response.

Huntingdon's Trevecca College became a symbol of irregular evangelicalism. It was admittance to the divide then taking place in the Church as political challenges forced irregulars further from the center of ecclesiastical life. Every student at Trevecca was required to preach in the nearby towns "without holy orders" including the two of the St. Edmund six who were sponsored by Lady Huntingdon to attend her new school.

⁵⁷⁴ Ollard, *The Six Students of St. Edmund Hall*, 38-39.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁷⁶ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 456.

Aaron C. Hobart Seymour recounts a story about Matthews and Shipman after their arrival at Lady Huntingdon's home at Turnbridge Wells. It plainly shows that leaders from the earlier generation of the Revival continued to press for irregularity. Those wedded to irregular methods seemed either incapable of interpreting the political situation or obstinate in their refusal to follow regular means.

It occurred to Lady Huntingdon that, as she had two ministers in her house, one of them should preach. Notice was accordingly sent round that on such an evening there would be preaching before her door. At the appointed time a great many people had collected together, which the young men seeing, inquired what it meant. Her Ladyship said: "As I have two preachers in my house, one of you must preach to the people." In reply they said they had never preached publicly, and wished to be excused. Mr. Shipman was a ready speaker, but Mr. Matthews was remarkably diffident. Lady Huntingdon, therefore, judged it best for Mr. Shipman to make the first attempt. While he hesitated she put a Bible into his hand, insisting upon his appearing before the people, and either tell them he was afraid to trust to God or do the best he could. On the servants opening the door, her Ladyship thrust him out with her blessing, saying, "The Lord be with you—do the best you can."⁵⁷⁷

Shipman continued to preach for Lady Huntingdon as an itinerant lay preacher. He is the only one of the six that is known to have gone into an irregular ministry. He died within three years of his expulsion from Oxford at the age of 24, reportedly from a broken blood vessel having "overworked" himself.⁵⁷⁸

Benjamin Kay and Thomas Grove are the most difficult to trace. Kay's career after the expulsions is not known. He came from Yorkshire, a hotbed of Evangelical Piety in the eighteenth century, where a sizeable number of Evangelical clergymen had grown up during the century. Grove is noted by Ollard for his Calvinist views on grace and free will.

⁵⁷⁷ Seymour, *Life of Lady Huntingdon*, 2:126, note.

⁵⁷⁸ Ollard, *The Six Students of St. Edmund Hall*, 37.

Of the six, Erasmus Middleton was the only member of the group to have made a lasting impression on Anglican Evangelicalism. Middleton went to Cambridge where he studied at Clare College.⁵⁷⁹ Although he studied with Joseph Townsend, an Evangelical who as rector of Pewsey itinerated for Lady Huntingdon, Middleton appears to have taken a regular ministry after his ordination. A. S. Wood writes that Middleton's ministry was "unusually effective."⁵⁸⁰ Middleton served in numerous capacities as a part of the Evangelical fraternity. His first two curacies were under leading Evangelicals, Romaine in London and Codagan in Chelsea. His assistantship at St. Margaret's, Westminster, was under Evangelical John Davies. He would later publish a history of international evangelicalism.⁵⁸¹

The Aftermath

Four of the students were said to have preached "without holy orders" and participated in "methodistical behaviour." It is clear, however, that the students themselves were not the focus of the trial, but the vulnerable casualties of larger political and theological realities. The aftermath of the trial saw the advent of a propaganda war. Whitefield wrote, "So severe a sentence, in an age when almost every kind of proper discipline is held with so lax a rein, hath naturally excited a

⁵⁷⁹ Ollard notes that Erasmus went to King's College, but the *Dictionary of Evangelical Biography* lists Clare.

⁵⁸⁰ *DEB*, 1117.

⁵⁸¹ See Erasmus Middleton, *Biographia Evangelica: or, an Historical Account of the Lives and Deaths of the Most Eminent and Evangelical Authors or Preachers, both British and Foreign, in the Several Denominations of Protestants from the Beginning of the Reformation, to the Present Time* (London: 1779).

curiosity in all that have heard it.”⁵⁸² Gibson describes it as an explosion which “released a flood of debate on the importance of academical subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles on matriculation or graduation.”⁵⁸³ With the propaganda war, the trial and evangelicalism were plunged into the political controversies of the day, some of which were only remotely related to the events at St. Edmund Hall. All of these political controversies, however, fed the machine that led to the expulsions.

Dissenters had always been against subscription by their very nature as dissenters. The connections between Evangelicals as standard-bearers of the Old Divinity and their Calvinist colleagues who dissented from the Established Church became more apparent with the Subscription Controversy. Yet not all Evangelicals of a Calvinist bent were in favor of discarding the subscription requirement. Some, like Hill, were dead set on the idea of subscription to the Articles as they had been interpreted by Calvinists.⁵⁸⁴ In this way, many Evangelicals felt that they were reviving the original intent of the Reformers who had written the Articles. Ward notes that “the evangelicals maintained that no one who did not accept the doctrine of predestination in their sense was loyal to the seventeenth article of the Church,” and, joining the fray, the

⁵⁸² George Whitefield, *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Durell, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford: Occasioned by a Late Expulsion of Six Students from Edmund Hall* (London: Printed for J. Millan, E. and C. Dilly and M. Folingsby, 1768), 8.

⁵⁸³ Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832*, 140.

⁵⁸⁴ See for example, Richard Hill, *A Gross Imposition Upon the Public Detected: or, Archbishop Cranmer Vindicated from the Charge of Pelagianism, Being a Brief Answer to a Pamphlet Entitled 'A Dissertation on the Seventeenth Article of the Church of England, Wherein the Sentiments of the Compilers and Other Contemporary Reformers on the Subject of the Divine Decrees are Fully Deduced from Their Own Writings'*; *In a Letter to the Dissertator by the Author of Pietas Oxoniensis* (Shrewsbury: Printed by J. Eddowes, [1774]).

Unitarians and other heterodox within the Church “now claimed that they asked for no more latitude in subscribing trinitarian Articles than the Arminians habitually obtained in subscribing articles Calvinist in colour.”⁵⁸⁵

The Subscription Controversy, according to J. C. D. Clark, was distinctly connected to the heterodox within the Church, particularly those of an anti-trinitarian bent. Clark wrote that “the cause of heterodox theology and the abolition of subscription within the Church was associated, above all, with Newcastle’s henchman in Cambridge University politics, Edmund Law.”⁵⁸⁶ Both groups ultimately demanded an end to subscription to the Articles, with the scriptures as the sole rule of faith. As such, the politics of the anti-subscription league may have had similar goals, but their theological views and the ways in which they might interpret that “sole rule of faith” made them out to be distinctly strange bedfellows.

These Unitarians, like the irregular evangelicals of St. Edmund Hall, did not escape persecution at Oxford or even relegation as the Church became more High Church during the 1760s and 70s. The isolation felt by one group was also felt by the other as both were considered fringe movements. Unlike the persecuted evangelicals, the loudest proponents of Unitarianism were found at this time in Cambridge, especially at Peterhouse. Clark notes that during Law’s mastership at Peterhouse, there was “produced a remarkable string of graduates whose reformist and even revolutionary proclivities in public life had its roots in religious heterodoxy, including

⁵⁸⁵ *Works*, 22:164, fn. 13.

⁵⁸⁶ Clark, *English Society*, 368.

Jebb, Disney and Lofft.”⁵⁸⁷ Law had been elected to his position at Peterhouse by fellows who had taught three undergraduates who would play specific roles as politicians on the anti-subscription side of the Subscription Controversy, including Lord John Cavendish, Augustus Fitzroy, and Sr. James Lowther, all champions of the Whig Party.⁵⁸⁸ Law’s argument against subscription, promulgated by his students on the political stage, tapped into the latent anti-Catholicism of the period. His claim was that the subscription requirement was in fact Papism, a coercive force, and a vestige of pre-Reformation England. This was not exactly the line taken by Evangelicals, but would have inspired dissenters who were convinced that the reforms of the English Church begun in the Reformation period had not gone far enough. What these strange political alliances point to, is the future of political debate. The arguments over the expulsion of the six students present in smaller detail the later battles that would be waged between a dissenting/Low Church bloc within the Whig Party and the High Church bloc within the Tories.

Nowell’s sermon given on the Feast Day of Charles I in 1772 before Parliament at St. Mary Magdalene, Westminster, provides a look into the mindset of High Church Tories of the period. Ollard interprets the sermon as a comparison of George III to Charles I and the Whigs as opponents of the latter king.⁵⁸⁹ One can see in his description of those who overthrew Charles I how Nowell might have viewed eighteenth-century dissent and irregularity. James Sack, in his work on the rise of an English Right, commented that “the attitude of the Right towards their fellow

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., 369-70.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁹ Ollard, *The Six Students of St. Edmund Hall*, 29.

Protestants in the English dissenting churches was above all an attitude steeped in a peculiar view of history.”⁵⁹⁰ This view was that the dissenters “were engaged in a nefarious conspiracy” and thus “hated in the seventeenth (or even the sixteenth) century” as those out to destroy the English monarchy and Church.⁵⁹¹ Nowell’s words encapsulate these sentiments:

When men consider themselves placed in their several subordinate stations . . . by the will of Him who is the fountain of government, the supreme Lord of heaven and earth; when they consider that all authority, dominion, and power, are his prerogative, and derived from him to those, whom his Providence has delegated to be his representatives upon earth; cheerful duty, and willing obedience, will be the natural result of such reflections. To minds under this persuasion, the ordinance of man will recommend themselves to be . . . the ordinances of God. So close is the connection between government and religion . . . that without this sacred band, all civil union would be dissolved; and mankind, given over to their own misrule, uncontroled [sic] by that Almighty Power which called them into being, and order, would by perpetually warring with one another reduce all things into a state of anarchy and confusion.⁵⁹²

Such was the view held by Jacobites who had refused to bow to the House of Orange earlier in the century. Until George III, this connection between Church and State had been less explicitly promoted. It is no surprise that George III would reinstitute Parliament’s celebration of the Feast Day of King Charles I as a nod to his political supporters, although he himself never actually attended the service.

While Nowell was in London proclaiming a distinct connection between Church and State, the Feathers’ Lane petition to end subscription was in circulation, even among some of the

⁵⁹⁰ James Sack, *From Jacobite to Conservative: Reaction and Orthodoxy in Britain, c. 1760-1832* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 199.

⁵⁹¹ Ibid.

⁵⁹² Thomas Nowell, *A Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons, at St. Margaret’s, Westminster, on Thursday, January XXX, 1772* (London:1772), 10.

Evangelical clergy. The 'Feathers Tavern petition' sought relaxation of the canonical requirements of the Church of England.⁵⁹³ Many of the Evangelicals were against the petition, but there was an obvious split in the movement over the issue since the expulsion of the students. The move was defeated in Parliament, but was not much different than the scandal caused by Bishop Hoadly earlier in the century who, as a bishop of the Church, denied that Christ had left any authority in the Church and that all Christians were then free to interpret the scriptures according to their consciences.⁵⁹⁴ This line of thinking went along with the politics of extreme Protestantism held by dissenters, theological liberals, and some of the Evangelicals, Newton among them.⁵⁹⁵

Nigel Yates noted that "such views completely undermined the ability of the Church of England to determine and require subscription to a particular doctrinal stance, and gave power to the state to regulate religion as it saw fit."⁵⁹⁶ In many respects, the arguments made on both sides of the Subscription Controversy, the anti-trinitarian controversy at Cambridge, and by Bishop Hoadley and his supporters, can be seen as the continued settlement of the Toleration Act itself, which in some respects had already unsettled the Church of England. The debate, however, promoted continued Anglican isolation with further relegation of groups such as the Evangelicals.

⁵⁹³ See Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 461-464.

⁵⁹⁴ For a modern assessment of Hoadly, see William Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate: Benjamin Hoadly 1676-1761* (Cambridge: James Clark, 2004).

⁵⁹⁵ See Newton, *Cardiphonia*.

⁵⁹⁶ Nigel Yates, *Eighteenth Century Britain 1714-1815*, 19.

John Wesley, an Oxonian till his dying breath, was according to Ward “delighted by the theological line” taken by the University “and the government backing it received.”⁵⁹⁷ Unlike Whitefield, Wesley showed no apparent interest in the expulsions themselves, but rather with the aftermath and the propaganda war.⁵⁹⁸ Wesley wrote in his *Journal* in November of 1768:

Sat. 19. I read Dr. Nowell’s *Answer* to Mr. Hill, concerning the expulsion of the students at Oxford. He has said all that could be said for that stretch of power, that instance of *summum ius*[]; and he says quite enough to clear the Church of England from the charge of predestination—a doctrine which he proves to be utterly inconsistent with the Common Prayer, the Communion Service, the Office of Baptism, the Articles, the Homilies, and the other writings of those that compiled them.⁵⁹⁹

What Wesley failed to see from the proceedings were the distinct connections between the actions of the six students and his cadre of lay preachers roaming the English countryside. It can be argued that his reference to Hill and Nowell’s debate had little to do with the actual reasons for the expulsions. Unlike Whitefield, Wesley refused publicly to admit the actual expulsions had any bearing on his ministry. Wesley’s founding of Kingswood can be seen as a reaction to the expulsions, but no explicit connection was made between the two by Wesley himself.

The six students were expelled for more than just field preaching. The Conventicle Act of 1664 outlawed all meetings of more than five persons to gather for worship, apart from that which

⁵⁹⁷ *Works*, 22:164, fn. 13.

⁵⁹⁸ For Whitefield’s immediate response to the expulsions, see George Whitefield, *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Durell, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford: Occasioned by a Late Expulsion of Six Students from Edmund Hall* (1768). Explicitly eliciting the common fear that Evangelicals would be unable to procure further ordinations in the Church, Whitefield wrote: “But alas! how is this general joy damped, and the pleasing prospect almost totally eclipsed, by a late melancholy scene exhibited in that very place from whence, as from a fountain, many of their preachers frequently and expressly pray, that pure streams may for ever flow to water the city of God?” (7-8).

⁵⁹⁹ *Works*, 22:164-165.

was prescribed in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Forsaith notes that the Conventicle Act was “repealed by the Toleration Act (1689) although elements of it remained in force.” The 1689 Act was not entirely clear and ecclesiastical authorities did not always apply it consistently.⁶⁰⁰

The Evangelicals were well aware of the Conventicle Act. Fletcher went to Martin Madan, an Evangelical and a lawyer, for his opinion on the Act. He also sought the opinion of John Henshaw, a lawyer in Shropshire, who wrote that the law was enforceable as the meetings in question were held “in other Manner than according to the Liturgy & Practice of the Church of England.”⁶⁰¹ In Fletcher’s case, where he had a small gathering in his own parish, the meeting was led by an ordained clergyman within the bounds of his parish. The meetings that the six students attended were not led by priests of the Established Church.

Nowell’s arguments, supported by the imprimatur of the Vice Chancellor of Oxford, backed the Evangelicals and their lead propagandist, Hill, into a corner. Nowell challenged Hill’s understanding of church history, and specifically that of the Church of England. He wrote, “had you the least degree of candor, you would not have been guilty of so shameful a misinterpretation, nor have had the confidence to impose it on the reader.”⁶⁰² The Evangelicals appeared to hold a distinctly narrow historiographical view of English religious history after the Reformation that excluded the majority of eighteenth-century churchmen. As a High Churchman, Wesley would have been more than comfortable with Nowell’s arguments. Although not held by all Evangelicals,

⁶⁰⁰ See chapter five for a discussion of “Methodist Conventicles.”

⁶⁰¹ See Forsaith, *Unexampled Labours*, 166, fn 123.

⁶⁰² Nowell, *An Answer to a Pamphlet, entitled Pietas Oxoniensis*, 82.

Hill's widely-read arguments for a purely Calvinistic interpretation of the Articles made the Evangelicals look out of touch with their orthodox Anglican colleagues.

Hill's venom against any Arminian interpretation of the seventeenth article was met with the sarcastic recommendation that he read the Carolingian divines and come to better appreciate the breadth of his own Anglican tradition.⁶⁰³ Nowell was not the only author to take Hill to task for his exclusive reading of the Articles; one Academicus continued to argue that Hill was unaware of his own Church's history writing:

I hope to make it evidently appear to the satisfaction of every fair enquirer, that not only a latitude of interpreting these articles was allowed from the beginning, but moreover that many of the most pious and learned divines of the English church have always subscribed them in a sense totally different from the rigid ideas of Calvin's theology.⁶⁰⁴

Irregular Casualties

The Church would emerge from the challenges to its hegemony in the late eighteenth century more securely settled. Not until the 1830s did challenges to the Church bring drastic changes to its dominance of the Universities and Parliament. With the decline of that hegemonic monopoly, a truly High Church movement would arise out of Oxford to decry that loss and shape the ecclesiastical landscape of Anglicanism.

These challenges would not overthrow the ecclesiastical standing of the Church of England in the eighteenth century. Rather, the casualties were those who, for theological and political

⁶⁰³ Academicus, *The Church of England Vindicated from the Rigid Notions of Calvinism; or, Some Observations on a Letter from the Author of Pietas Oxoniensis to the Revered Doctor Adams of Shrewsbury. To which is added, A Letter to the Revered Mr. Romaine, in Answer to his Letter to Dr. Adams.* (London: Printed for B. White, in Fleet-Street; and T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1770), 37-39.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 18-19.

reasons, placed themselves on the outskirts of the mainstream of eighteenth-century Anglicanism.

The political challenges to Anglican hegemony in the later part of the eighteenth century were simply a cry to expand the Toleration Act of the seventeenth century, and a precursor to the Church Reform Acts of the nineteenth century, which spurred John Keble and others to launch the Oxford Movement. Thus for anyone who wished to remain within the bounds of the Church, opposition to the Restoration establishment of the Church of England was seen as a dangerous form of ecclesial challenge

CHAPTER NINE

THE CALVINIST CONTROVERSY: A NEW HISTORIOGRAPHY

O Almighty God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord: Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect for All Saints' Day

It has long been argued that the split between Wesley and the Evangelical clergy came about because of arguments over predestination and perfectionism. These two theological issues were both highly controversial. Outside of the Revival, both Wesleyan perfectionism and a Calvinist understanding of predestination were seen as extremist. Within the historiography of Methodism, it has become commonplace to designate entire decades to controversies surrounding these two doctrines, the 1760s to perfectionism and the following decade to predestination. The standard line, if there is one, is that the great debate between the Calvinists and the Arminians over these theological issues caused a split in the Revival between Calvinist and Arminian branches. The argument is that this division took place especially after the Calvinist controversies of the 1770s. The one book written on John Wesley and his relationship to the Evangelical Anglicans takes up this standard line, and argues that these theological issues were at the root of the eventual split.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁵ Albert Brown-Lawson, *John Wesley and the Anglican Evangelicals of the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Cooperation and Separation with Special Reference to the Calvinistic Controversies* (Edinburgh: Pentland, 1994).

The argument of this dissertation has been all along that although theological differences were apparent between Wesley and many of the Evangelicals, some for different reasons than others, the divide that took place must be seen in a broader context. Theological debate alone was not enough to send these Evangelical colleagues to different corners. The trajectories of these various men were set well before the infamous fights of the 1770s. Wesley's sermon on "Free Grace" and his brother's distinctly Arminian hymns published with it in the late 1730s were well known in the Revival.⁶⁰⁶ The theological divide over free will and predestination had spanned the century. Had the divide been over theological issues, it would have taken place much earlier than 1770. Polity was a larger factor in the division that ultimately resulted than were the debates over predestination.

Theology, however, should not be overlooked. All of the issues discussed so far have been related to theology, if not explicitly. Yet the historiographical methodology used to describe Wesley and the Evangelicals cannot be overlooked either. This chapter will attempt to outline a larger-scaled historiography of English Christianity that places Wesley and the bulk of the Evangelical clergy—those known by their moderate Calvinism—on different sides of the Anglican *via media*. In a sense, the purpose of the current chapter is to place these divergent theologies within an overarching Anglican model, acknowledging their common English roots, while at the same time identifying their distinct trajectories within the Anglican scheme.

While the Anglican *via media* has often been used as a propaganda piece to place the Church of England and the Anglican tradition snugly between Roman Catholicism and hyper-

⁶⁰⁶ Wesley, Sermon 110, "On Free Grace" *Works*, 3:542-63.

Calvinism, the model may still be of use. What it might need to be described as is not necessarily a “middle way,” but rather a ship with a Catholic starboard and a Reformed port.⁶⁰⁷ Throughout the history of English Christianity after the Reformations the ship has rocked back and forth.⁶⁰⁸ A tradition that includes Stephen Gardiner and Thomas Cranmer, William Laud and Oliver Cromwell, John Wesley and William Romaine is bound to teeter between supposedly divergent theologies. The English Reformers, the Caroline Divines, the Puritans, and the Non-Jurors were all a part of the English Church. They are all represented on the Anglican ship. Even the Tractarians of the nineteenth century fit on this ship, although distinctly on one side of it. By the time that the Evangelical Revival came on the scene, John Wesley and the Evangelical Anglicans simply represented different sides of that ship. Thus, they were bound to work separately, albeit it within the same ecclesiastical space.⁶⁰⁹

As with other models, such as the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral,” this metaphor of an Anglican ship will break down if pressed too far.⁶¹⁰ John Wesley was obviously influenced by the Protestant Reformations and the Puritans. The Evangelicals were obviously influenced by the larger catholic

⁶⁰⁷ I am using the term “Catholic” to describe those traditional elements which are common among Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox Christianity. These elements would include an emphasis on the centrality of the Eucharist or Mass, use of ancient forms of liturgy, emphasis on apostolic succession and the three-fold clerical orders of bishop, priest, and deacon, and belief in the efficacy of the Sacraments. References to the Roman Catholic Church will include the full use of the name.

⁶⁰⁸ In fact, it could be argued that the English Reformation itself lasted much longer than is usually thought, extending through the Civil War period up to the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660.

⁶⁰⁹ While not using the model of a ship, Archbishop Ramsey described as the Anglican Church as “committed not to a vague position wherein the Evangelical and Catholic views are alterations, but to the scriptural faith wherein both elements are of one.” See A. M. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (London: Longman & Green Co., 1936), pgs. 208-9.

⁶¹⁰ See Hempton’s critique of the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” in *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 56.

tradition. William Gibson has rightly argued that doctrinal divisions between High and Low Churchmanship were “permeable” and that within this scope a churchman could hold a range of views.⁶¹¹ The stark difference appears when it is seen that Wesley was much more influenced by and used the lens of the early church and the Caroline Divines (Catholic Christianity) and the Evangelicals the English Reformers and Puritanism. The two look back to these different periods of Church history to define their ministries and theological perspectives. The basis upon which they formed their theological outlooks was of a different hue and even a different trajectory.

Another way to describe this difference is simply to place the Non-Juror-influenced Wesley and the Puritan-influenced Evangelicals next to one another. Walsh has written:

If evangelicals themselves had been asked what their Revival intended to revive, they would have had a ready answer. It was a restatement of the “good old divinity” of English Puritans and Reformers, a resurgence of that ancient tradition of Augustinian spirituality which evangelical historians like Joseph Milner attempted ingeniously, but not absurdly, to trace back through the medieval centuries to the primitive church itself.⁶¹²

Bebbington argued in a similar vein that the early Evangelicals used the New Testament as their principal source “filtered through the theology of the magisterial Reformation.”⁶¹³ This lens, or filter, was distinctly different then that used by Wesley. A simple perusal of Wesley’s historical writings and that of Milner provides a glimpse into this distinction. While both men used a theologically-informed methodology to produce their various works, Milner explicitly traces what

⁶¹¹ William Gibson, “Samuel Wesley’s Conformity Reconsidered” in *Methodist History*, 47:2 (January 2009): 75.

⁶¹² Walsh, “Anglican Evangelicals,” 87.

⁶¹³ Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 13.

should be called evangelicalism through church history, especially highlighting the Puritans and the English Reformation.⁶¹⁴

Wesley's historical writing is explicitly theocentric and shows deference not only to the Reformation as a means of overthrowing Roman Catholic influence, but also shows deference for the High Church "martyr" Charles I.⁶¹⁵ He also had great respect for the Non-Jurors, especially Bishop Thomas Ken. Ward claims that it was Wesley's upbringing that initially instilled in him deference for the High Church and especially the Jacobites.⁶¹⁶ He wrote that Wesley was "born into a Jacobite milieu" and the "younger brother of a (non-Methodist) collaborator of Bishop Atterbury," a bishop with striking High Church sympathies that ended his days exiled and in service to the dethroned Stuarts. According to Ward, "Wesley did not adopt the world as his parish; indeed his one substantial trip abroad was to a nest of Jacobites in Georgia, headed by General Oglethorpe, who had been christened James Edward for the Old (Jacobite) Pretender."⁶¹⁷

The basic claim of this paradigm is that Wesley representing a Catholic Anglicanism and the Evangelicals representing Reformed/Puritan Anglicanism could not suffer one another long.

⁶¹⁴ See Joseph Milner, *The History of the Church of Christ, Volume the First: Containing the First Three Centuries*, New Edition (London: Luke Hansard and Sons for T. Cadell, in the Strand, 1827). Milner wrote at the beginning of his history: "It is certain, that from our Saviour's time to the present, there have ever been persons whose dispositions and lives have been formed by the rules of the New Testament; men, who have been real, not merely nominal Christians; who believed the doctrines of the Gospel, loved them because of their divine excellency, and suffered gladly the loss of all things that they might win Christ and be found in him. It is the history of these men which I propose to write," (A2).

⁶¹⁵ See John Wesley, *Concise History of England, from the Earliest Times to the Death of George II* (London: 1775).

⁶¹⁶ Given the success of Methodism in Cornwall, it is interesting to note that Cornwall was also a stronghold of Tory High Churchmanship and Non-Jurors. See H. Miles Brown, *The Church in Cornwall* (Truro: Oscar Blackford, 1964), 64.

⁶¹⁷ Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 119.

Their politics, their polity, and their theology would guide them to diverge. This model, together with the issues of polity and practice that have been discussed up to this point, provides a context in which to understand more broadly the issues and personalities that drove the Wesleyans and the Evangelicals apart. The battles between Catholic and Reformed Anglicanism stretch back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were represented within the Evangelical Revival, and appear in the nineteenth century with the rise of both an Evangelical Party and the Oxford Movement battling for the soul of the Church of England. They were not determined, however, simply by the doctrine of predestination. John Wesley's theology needs to be seen within the context of this larger struggle for Anglican identity.

Wesley the Tory

The divergent lenses through which Wesley and the Evangelicals saw their work and theological outlook can be seen almost to separate Wesley from the Evangelical Revival itself. In the fights for "the real Wesley" in the nineteenth century between Methodists and High Churchmen, some of the polemical works of the High Church party seemed almost to imply that Wesley was not an Evangelical at all.⁶¹⁸ Recently, however, in an attempt to balance the view of institutional Methodism promoted by Luke Tyerman and John Telford, Ward has highlighted Wesley's connections to the Non-Jurors and the Tories. In blunt fashion, Ward wrote that "Wesley, in short, was born into a rabidly Tory circle which damned foreigners, foreign religions

⁶¹⁸ Both Harrington William Holden, *John Wesley in the Company of High Churchmen* (London: 1870) and Richard Denny Urrin's *The Churchman's Life of Wesley*, were written in the heat of an ecclesiastical firestorm, and seem almost to make Wesley an outright High Churchman devoid of evangelical convictions.

and foreign entanglements,” adding that Wesley did not throw these sentiments overboard after his Aldersgate experience, but “kept up Jacobite sentiment far down the eighteenth century.”⁶¹⁹ For this group, the Restoration was not only the reconstruction of the Church of England, but a “revival of morality” that Ward argues they saw as “a cosmic event modelled on the resurrection.”⁶²⁰

This revival of morality was not based on the Puritan divines, but on the Catholic tradition. Works such as those written by William Law and Jeremy Taylor represent this “holy living” tradition within Anglicanism. Wesley’s debt to these two authors and especially Law’s *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* and Taylor’s *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* is widely acknowledged. Wesley’s famous *Journal* is an outgrowth of this tradition of spiritual discipline. He read the works of these Caroline Divines while at Oxford, that seat of restorationist movements throughout English history.

Taylor was a favorite of Restoration England. He had served with Laud and been chaplain ordinary to Charles I. After the Restoration, Taylor was made Bishop of Down and Connor in Ireland and Chancellor of the University of Dublin.⁶²¹ The drive toward moral revival, or

⁶¹⁹ Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 296.

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

⁶²¹ Taylor’s explicit Catholicism can be seen in his works, including: *On the Reverence Due to the Altar* (London[?]:1649) , *An Apologie for Authorized and Set Forms of Liturgie* (London[?]:1649), *The Golden Grove, or, A Manuall of Daily Prayers and Letanies, fitted to the Days of the Week . . . Also, Festival Hymns, According to the Manner of the Ancient Church* (London[?]:1655).

“primitive Christianity,” was a reaction to what Ward described as the “crass dichotomy in Restoration England between official and public confession and private conduct.”⁶²²

One distinct connection Wesley displayed for the High Church tradition was his deference for Charles I. Charles remains the only canonized saint of the Church of England. His sainthood after the Restoration was an obvious rejection of the Puritans, and a brilliant public relations scheme began shortly after the king’s execution, or martyrdom, in 1649 with the publication of *Eikon Basilike*. This royalist propaganda, published ten days after the death of the king, was purported to be have been written by Charles himself.⁶²³ Although, as Ward notes, it is hard to tell what Wesley said, his *Journal* indicates that he preached regularly on January 30, Charles’s feast day.

Wesley twice visited Carisbrooke Castle, the castle on the Isle of Wight where Charles was held prisoner between his trial and execution. The *Journal* accounts of these visits are telling in that they display a shift in his perspective. In both accounts, Wesley notes seeing the window through which Charles attempted to escape. In the first account, Wesley describes “poor King Charles.”⁶²⁴ In the second, the visit inspired him to ponder “that whole train of occurrences wherein the hand of God was so eminently seen.”⁶²⁵ It is explicitly not clear from his later comment whether it

⁶²² Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 34-35.

⁶²³ See Paul Kléber Monod, *The Power of Kings: Monarchy and Religion in Europe, 1589-1715* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 184-191.

⁶²⁴ *Works*, 20:467 (July 11, 1753).

⁶²⁵ John Wesley, *Journals and Diaries VI (1776-1786)*, ed. W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, Vol.

should be taken as pro-royalist or pro-parliamentarian. Given Wesley's royalist proclivities, especially after the American Revolution when the visit was made, it is not unlikely that the "whole train of occurrences" included the restoration of the Church and monarchy under Charles II in 1660.⁶²⁶ This interpretation of the events of the Civil War, Commonwealth, and Restoration was explicit in the prayers appointed for Evening Prayer on January 30.⁶²⁷

A *Journal* entry for January 30, 1785 describes Wesley preaching on Psalm 119:137, a text not appointed for the feast day. Wesley claimed to have "endeavoured to point out those sins which were the chief cause of that awful transaction we commemorate this day." The chief sin, however, was the King's persecution of "the real Christians."⁶²⁸ By persecution of "the real Christians," Charles drove them "into the hands of designing men" and brought about the end of his reign. This interpretation of the events Ward describes as "an ingenious adjustment of the Jacobitism of his early milieu to the respect for Puritan vital religion which he had acquired."⁶²⁹

23 of the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 372, (August 10, 1785).

⁶²⁶ *Works*, 23:372-373, fn. 21.

⁶²⁷ One of the collects appointed for Evening Prayer on January 30 in the BCP reads:

Blessed God, just, and powerful, who didst permit thy dear servant, our late dread Sovereign, to be this day given up to the violent out-rages of wicked men, to be despitely used, and at last murdered by them; Though we cannot reflect upon so foul an act but with horror and astonishment; yet do we most greatly commemorate the glories of thy grace, which then shined forth in thine Anointed, whom thou wert pleased, even at the hour of death, to endue with an eminent measure of exemplary patience, meekness, and charity, before the face of his cruel enemies. And albeit, thou didst suffer them to proceed to such a height of violence against him, as to kill his person, and take possession of his throne; yet didst thou in great mercy preserve his son, whose right it was, and at length by a wonderful providence bring him back, and set him thereon, to restore thy true Religion, and to settle peace among us: For which, we glorify thy Name, through Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour. *Amen*.

⁶²⁸ *Works*, 23:342 (Sunday, January 30 [1785]).

Wesley had found a place for Puritan vital religion, although distinctly contained within a celebration of one of High Church Anglicanism's principal feast days.

Another means by which Wesley displayed his affection for the High Church and especially for Non-Jurors was his admiration for the writings of Charles Leslie. Leslie, an Irish Anglican Non-Juror, was known for his publications supporting the Stuarts, but also for High Church theology, especially of a high sacramentalist sort. Leslie, like Atterbury, spent time abroad with the Stuarts, but grew tired of Roman Catholicism and returned to Ireland where he died in 1722. Wesley read and republished many of Leslie's works. He donated a number of Leslie's books to the Kingswood library. These books contain much of Leslie's High Churchmanship, but specifically his disdain for heresy, Deism, and liturgical innovation.⁶³⁰ One of Leslie's works, *The History of Sin and Heresy Attempted, from the First War they Raised in Heaven . . . [to] their Final Condemnation in Hell* (1698), Wesley republished in his *Arminian Magazine* in 1778 as "Thoughts on Absolute Predestination."⁶³¹

⁶²⁹ Ibid. fn. 85.

⁶³⁰ Special thanks to Randy Maddox for providing this information. The books include Leslie's: *The History of Sin and Heresy Attempted, from the first war they raised in heaven ... [to] their final condemnation in hell*. (London: H. Hindmarsh, 1698 [§XIII.2 Of Foreknowledge and Freedom]); *A Religious Conference between a Minister and Parishioner; concerning the practice of our orthodox Church of England, in baptizing infants by pouring water on their faces or sprinkling them, and in confirming them afterwards by the bishop, proving all three lawful by good reasons and the authority of Holy Scripture; with a vindication of the lawfulness of godfathers and godmothers, and of the sacred order of bishops and their being spiritual lords*. (London: Charles Brome et al., 1698); *A Short and Easy Method with the Deists, wherein the Certainty of the Christian Religion is Demonstrated by Infallible proof from Four Rules ... To which is added, a second part to the Jews ... with an answer to the most material of their objections, and prejudices against Christianity*, published by Wesley as *A Preservative Against Unsettled Notions in Religion* (1758); *The Snake in the Grass; or, Satan Transformed into an Angel of Light*, 2nd edition. (London: Charles Brome, 1697); and *The Socinian Controversy Discussed* (London: G. Strahan, 1708), published by Wesley as "Extract of Preface in *Arminian Magazine* 10 (1787): 491-493, 542-545, 593-596, 643-645.

⁶³¹ See *Arminian Magazine* 1 (1778): 356-363.

Wesley inherited a strong Tory tradition from his parents who, Hempton notes, “were nevertheless divided on the legitimacy of the Hanoverian regime.” According to Hempton, Wesley “flirted with Jacobitism (later vigorously denied) in his early Oxford days and in the surprisingly Jacobite circles in which some of the early leaders of the evangelical revival were located.”⁶³² These early Jacobite associations would include Oxford Methodist John Clayton, who was raised in the Jacobite stronghold of Manchester. It was Clayton who originally influenced Wesley to study the early church and to see the importance of a theology of works.⁶³³ Walsh has described Wesley’s theology as “strongly eudaemonic.” He wrote that Wesley understood the ideal Christian life as “a life of ceaseless, cheerful, activism.”⁶³⁴

Hempton argues that Wesley “as with many erstwhile Jacobites” finally came to accept the Hanoverian regime because he came to believe that the Glorious Revolution “had ushered in an unprecedented era of civil and religious liberty.” However, Hempton notes this peace with the Hanoverians did not mean peace with Robert Walpole.⁶³⁵ Wesley’s Jacobite sentiments were clearly seen in his staunch opposition to the policies of the Whig government. He was following the footsteps of his father who as a strident Tory had seen his ecclesiastical career stunted by Whig dominance. Even after Walpole, Wesley’s staunch Toryism can be seen explicitly in his cries of

⁶³² Hempton, “Wesley in Context,” 70.

⁶³³ See Rack’s description of Wesley’s theology in *Reasonable Enthusiast*, as well as Randy L. Maddox’s *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994).

⁶³⁴ Walsh, “John Wesley 1703-1791,” 7.

⁶³⁵ Hempton, “Wesley in Context” in *Companion*, 70.

God and King during the American Revolution.⁶³⁶ This Toryism and flirtation with Jacobitism do not set Wesley apart from every leader of the Revival, but they do mark him out as noticeably different from the moderate Calvinists who came to define the Revival and the Evangelical Party. Wesley was connected to political movements which were distinctly connected with High Church or Catholic Anglicanism.

The holy living tradition that sprang from the renewal of Catholic Anglicanism after the Restoration was not foreign to the Evangelical Revival. Although most Evangelicals in the period would ultimately undergo their conversion experiences as a reaction to their fears that they were not among the “elect,” Whitefield’s experience was specifically connected to the holy living tradition. Hindmarsh notes that although Whitefield “would move in an increasingly Calvinist direction in his own theology,” the “spiritual anxiety that prompted his conversion was induced in 1735 more by the high-church piety of William Law and the ‘holy living’ tradition than by any introspective doubts that came with a high predestinarian theology.”⁶³⁷

These varied approaches to a conversion experience match well the tangential nature of the Revival itself. They also show that the Revival was more than the revival of the “old theology” represented principally in the eighteenth century by English dissent. While not exclusively a revival of Puritanism, however, the “old theology” dominated the majority of Evangelicals. So while Bebbington will claim that the Revival represented “an expansion of the Puritan experience in the

⁶³⁶ See Wesley’s *Calm Address to Our American Colonies* (London: 1775). For a recent study see Weber, *Politics in the Order of Salvation*.

⁶³⁷ Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 107-108.

seventh century,” he will go on to claim that the evangelical experience of the eighteenth century should be distinguished from the seventeenth because of the “extensive connectedness of local revival to revival elsewhere, to a world that transcended the local milieu of parish, denomination, or sect.”⁶³⁸

Ironically, given his High Church sympathies both before and after, Wesley’s conversion was of a distinctly pietistic flavor. As has been discussed earlier in this work, his conversion was a part of an evangelical sweep that caught up persons from diverse places and varying degrees of churchmanship. Regardless of this diversity, the majority of the leaders of the Revival were of a distinctly moderate Calvinist outlook. Wesley, among this group, was still the odd man of the Revival regardless of conversion experiences, parish boundaries, or lay preachers.

There is no doubt that Wesley promoted certain aspects of the “old divinity;” his frequent citation of the Homilies and his republication of Puritan divines, however edited, in his *Christian Library* make that plain. Wesley held a strong doctrine of original sin, believed in the need for repentance and the New Birth, and emphasized justification by faith alone. As Walsh notes, however, “there was another side to the medal.”⁶³⁹ He wrote:

Victorian High Anglicans striving to win back errant Methodists to the priestly fold in which their founder had lived and died pointed to dimensions of Wesley’s mature faith and practice which were hard to square with the image of Wesley as godfather of the Evangelical Alliance, or as Dwight Moody in a tricorne hat and knee breeches.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁸ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 70.

⁶³⁹ Walsh, “John Wesley 1703-1791,” 10.

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

High Church Anglicans of the Victorian era would latch onto this Wesley, while the Methodists of the period strove to ignore the High Church facet of the man as much as possible. While Wesley held to some of the distinctly Protestant elements of the Anglican tradition, he was also a strong sacramentalist. He believed in the doctrine of the Real Presence, baptismal regeneration, and prayed for the faithful departed. Wesley also emphasized “constant” communion and the use of ancient patterns of prayer and fasting more reminiscent of monasticism. Roman Catholic eccentrics such as Gaston de Renty and Gregory Lopez were, in fact, role models he promoted among the Methodist societies. His admiration for these two men lasted throughout much of his life.

There is a sharp difference, however, between Wesley’s admiration of Catholic examples of saintliness and the Roman Catholic Church as an institution. Eamon Duffy begins his essay on Wesley and the Counter-Reformation with the words “John Wesley detested Roman Catholicism.”⁶⁴¹ Wesley’s anti-Roman sentiments are well known. He was entirely distrustful of the political institution called the Roman Catholic Church. Duffy wrote that Wesley “thought that in pursuit of its own interests the Catholic Church would not hesitate to ‘burst all the ties of truth, justice and mercy,’ and he believed that no government—whether it be ‘Protestant, Mahometan or Pagan’—should tolerate Roman Catholics.”⁶⁴² Wesley’s distrust for Roman Catholic political

⁶⁴¹ Eamon Duffy, “Wesley and the Counter-Reformation” in *Revival and Religion since 1700: Essays for John Walsh*, ed. Jane Garnett and Colin Matthew (Rio Grande: Hambledon Press, 1993), 1.

⁶⁴² Ibid. Duffy described Lopez and De Renty in his essay. He described Lopez as “an eccentric Spanish hermit who died in Mexico in 1596,” and De Renty as, “a French nobleman best known for his philanthropic and religious activities, and in particular for his part in the development of a sort of seventeenth-century *Opus Dei*, the powerful secret society of wealthy devout lay people known as the Company of the Blessed Sacrament,” (1).

aspirations in England resulted in his connection to the Protestant Association and through them to the notorious Gordon Riots of the 1780s. These political feelings, however, did not detract from Wesley's insistence on theological propositions which were a part of the larger Catholic tradition.⁶⁴³

This combination of disdain for Roman Catholicism with Anglican High Churchmanship was not uncommon. As the century wore on, the Tories came to be seen as the party of the Church of England. As a political/religious force they were distinctly nationalistic and combined this nationalism with a distinct bigotry for the Established Church. James Sack describes Toryism of this period as constituting the "normative example of right-wing political groupings throughout Europe and her off-shoots beyond the seas in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."⁶⁴⁴ The amalgamation of a religious group with a political party was not new, but was particularly pronounced in the case of the Tories and their combination of High Churchmanship, loyalty to the Establishment and its Church, and political conservatism. Sack's description of the Methodists' place within this political climate is worth noting. He describes the "Arminian Methodists" as having had "a strangely self-conscious relationship with the High Church."⁶⁴⁵ This much was seen in the last chapter. Establishment Tories were not keen of Methodism's proclivity for irregularity. Regardless of this tension, Wesley himself was firmly planted in this political-religious perspective. Sack wrote:

⁶⁴³ See Aelred Burrows' chapter "Wesley the Catholic" in John Stacey, ed., *John Wesley : Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Epworth Press, 1988).

⁶⁴⁴ Sack, *From Jacobite to Conservative*, 35.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

John Wesley, to the end of his long life, called himself a High Churchman—which he presumably meant in a political sense, as he coupled it with his belief in passive obedience and non-resistance, and he had given up any belief in the apostolic succession as early as 1746. Wesley strongly admired Horne, Jones, and Johnson (“that great man”) and supported Dr. Nowell at the time of the expulsion of the six predestinarian Oxford students in 1769 [sic]. In return Johnson approved of Wesley; Jones of Nayland thought him a “wonderful man in his way;” and Bishop Horne as late as 1790 allowed him to preach from a pulpit in his diocese.⁶⁴⁶

The maintenance of Wesley’s Tory connections seem at odds with his maverick evangelicalism, but they should not be overlooked. What they provide is a key distinction in perspective from the majority of the Evangelicals who saw their role in the Church as a restoration of the principles of the English Reformation. The Jacobites and Tories, however, saw that same reformation as having needed the counter-balance of Anglicanism’s Catholic stream.

The Old Divinity

The Evangelical Revival was seen, as Walsh has noted, by many of its participants as a renewal, or restoration, of “The Old Divinity,” the theology of the English Reformers and the Puritans of the seventeenth century. One contemporary critic of the eighteenth-century Church commented that the writings of the Protestant martyr Bishops Latimer and Ridley would not be seen as theologically acceptable within the milieu of early eighteenth century Anglicanism.⁶⁴⁷ John Newton, claiming that Evangelicals, and especially those in the country, were being falsely accused of promoting “the Dissenting Interest,” argued that these Evangelicals were simply promoting the

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷ Robert Seagrave, *A letter to the people of England*, 28.

standard doctrines and methods of the Church of England. If the incumbents who followed these Evangelicals held to the same standards, Newton claimed, their congregations would not “wholly forsake their favourite church.”⁶⁴⁸

Evangelical congregations did leave the Church of England. It has already been noted that Samuel Walker’s congregation left the Church after his death. Henry Venn’s parish church did the very same thing after he left. These departures had much to do with the dearth of Evangelicals to fill vacant pulpits, but Newton’s justification for the departures is telling. The Evangelicals were promoting a distinct vision of Anglicanism that did not fit well within either the High Church wing or with the Latitudinarian majority. Hindmarsh claims that “while Calvinism never recovered the prominence it had had in public and religious discourse during the seventeenth century, there was nevertheless a significant return to Reformed theology in the context of the Evangelical Revival.”⁶⁴⁹ They were promoting a Calvinist vision of Anglicanism, dominant among the Reformers and the Puritans in the two previous centuries, but more at home in the dissenting meeting house than in the Anglican parish church by the eighteenth century.⁶⁵⁰ This is the reason why David Lyle Jeffery writes in his volume on the spiritual life of the Revival of the “affection and respect evangelical Anglicans felt toward Independents and Puritans” when he describes the role of dissenting literature on the conversion of Evangelical layman William Wilberforce.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁸ John Newton, *Memoirs of the Life of the Late Rev. William Grimshaw ...: With Occasional Reflections; in Six Letters to the Rev. Henry Forster* (London: 1814), 102-103.

⁶⁴⁹ Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, 50.

⁶⁵⁰ See *Ibid.*, 236-237.

This “Old Divinity,” as it was known, was based on a particularly Reformed reading of the standards of Anglican theology. For example, in the controversy following the expulsion of Calvinist Methodists from St. Edmund Hall, Toplady argued publicly for a Calvinist reading of the Articles of Religion that left little room for most Anglicans.⁶⁵² While most Evangelicals, and especially Newton, would not have argued for such an exclusivist reading of the Articles, Toplady used the lens through which most Evangelicals would have seen these foundational documents themselves. In their view, the Articles, Homilies, and liturgy of the Church were, apart from traces of a High Church past, Reformed documents. This is why Elliott-Binns in his partisan history of the early Evangelicals described the theology of the Evangelicals as simply “those of the Church of England as contained in the Articles, Prayer Book, and Homilies.” The Evangelicals differed from their fellow priests, according to Elliott-Binns, by placing special emphasis on “certain doctrines” and “reviving them and bringing out their true meaning.”⁶⁵³

Evangelical Anglicans as a group saw themselves as a moderate form of Calvinism. Bebbington describes the Evangelicals as moderate in that they “rejected stronger views of God’s control of human destiny.” Evangelicals, Wesley included, left room for human agency. Humans, “they emphatically taught, [were] responsible agents.”⁶⁵⁴ This moderate Calvinism can be seen in

⁶⁵¹ David Lyle Jeffrey, *English Spirituality in the Age of Wesley* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 38.

⁶⁵² See Augustus Toplady, *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism* (Holborn: Joseph Gurney, 1769).

⁶⁵³ Elliott-Binns, *The Early Evangelicals*, 382.

⁶⁵⁴ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 64.

Newton's comment that Calvinism, like tea, should only be served with sugar.⁶⁵⁵ Likewise, Walker has been called a moderate Calvinist. Davies goes so far to question the designation altogether. He quotes a sermon by Walker which included a striking place for human will and agency:

For as in a reconciled God he proposes to our reason or understanding the most suitable and convincing argument into our obedience, so thereby he stirs up our wills in the most deliberate manner, with the freest consent, and without the least constraint or violence to choose the holy way of God's commandments.⁶⁵⁶

The role of human agency and the English proclivity to read the doctrine of total depravity in a more generous way than their Continental counterparts may have influenced the Evangelicals.

Bebbington has described this moderation principally in relation to the doctrine of reprobation—the doctrine that God had destined certain persons specifically for damnation. He argues that the Evangelicals generally rejected this traditional Calvinist doctrine and instead insisted that human disobedience was the root of any failure to respond to the gospel.⁶⁵⁷ What drew most Evangelicals to Calvinism had nothing to do with the logical system of the Swiss reformer. They saw Calvinism, and its emphasis on divine agency, as the best description of their conversion experiences. And these conversion experiences were common to the Puritans of the seventeenth century. Hindmarsh wrote that “the Puritans fostered spiritual autobiography in part by their stress upon religious experience.”⁶⁵⁸ In Hindmarsh's reading of early evangelical

⁶⁵⁵ Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, 168.

⁶⁵⁶ Davies, *The Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 155.

⁶⁵⁷ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 64.

⁶⁵⁸ Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 35.

conversion narratives, he argued not only that the international Evangelical Revival was “constituted chiefly by the repeated experience of evangelical conversion,” but that there was an “irreducibly religious element in this experience that was in continuity with seventeenth-century Puritanism and related traditions.”⁶⁵⁹ This direct connection between the Puritans and the Evangelical Revival was acknowledged by the Evangelicals. The Puritans were seen as simply taking the reforms of the sixteenth-century rupture with Roman Catholicism to its logical conclusion.

A Calvinist in post-Restoration England was, however, as Walsh has described it, “a rare bird.” He argues that by 1720 the Anglican Calvinist was almost extinct: “after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the Calvinism which had dominated the Church for much of a century fell into decline.”⁶⁶⁰ The politics of seventeenth-century Puritanism created a context in which Calvinism was suspect. Walsh writes:

Puritan doctrines seemed too closely associated with Puritan politics. Calvinism had acquired deep psychological associations with the Civil War and Commonwealth, the antinomianism of sectaries, the dismemberment of the Church, the killing of the king. These folk memories dogged it like a kind of political original sin for more than a century to come.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., 80.

⁶⁶⁰ Walsh, “The Anglican Evangelicals,” 87. For a different understanding of the decline of Calvinism in the Church of England, see Stephan Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Hampton’s fluid application of the term “Reformed” makes it possible for him to argue for a stronger Calvinist presence within the Church of England after the Restoration. Hampton notes that, “it is necessary to adopt a broad and flexible understanding of Reformed theology, if we are to identify any post-Restoration Anglicans as a Reformed writer,” (269). See Hampton’s argument for the effects of his historiographical approach to the rise of the Evangelical Revival, (272). Walsh’s description seems to describe better the effects of anti-Calvinist sentiment during the period, as does Dewey D. Wallace’s description of the same period in *Shapers of English Calvinism 1660-1714: Variety, Persistence, and Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Wallace provides a wider lens, with a more discernable definition of the terms “Calvinist” and “Reformed.”

⁶⁶¹ Walsh, “Evangelical Anglicans,” 87.

Robert Seagrave, in his *A Letter to the People of England* (1735), supplied a contemporary account of the void left in English religious life following the collapse of Anglican Calvinism. He wrote vehemently that “learning and oratory, it must be owned, are arrived at great perfection; but our true *Old Divinity* is gone.”⁶⁶² Evangelical William Romaine bewailed the same loss of what he described as “vital religion,” a loss that according to Romaine in 1775 took place “more than a century ago.”⁶⁶³ This “old divinity” as Wallace has described it, was a form of Calvinism that had dominated the Church of England under the influence of Thomas Cranmer, Martin Bucer, Richard Baxter, and Thomas Owen.⁶⁶⁴ Apart from the chapels royal, Calvinism held great sway over the theology and liturgy of the newly-formed Church of England beginning in the Elizabethan era and extending to the Restoration.⁶⁶⁵ Seagrave describes this Calvinist Anglicanism as having at one point been the “universal belief amongst Protestants at the Reformation,” and claimed that the pulpits of England “know no other language” than faith only as “the genuine method of

⁶⁶² Robert Seagrave, *A letter to the people of England. Occasion'd by the falling away of the clergy from the doctrines of the Reformation* (London: 1735). Robert Seagrave, Jr., an Evangelical clergyman, would work with both Wesley and Whitefield, (see p. 6).

⁶⁶³ William Romaine, *An Essay on Psalmody* (London: 1775), 104.

⁶⁶⁴ See Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525-1695* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1982, 2004).

⁶⁶⁵ The divisions of earlier periods were distinctly present in the Restoration period as another example of the long historical memory of the English people. Wallace writes that “Restoration England was a deeply divided society and strong currents ran against those who sought to create a more inclusive established church or allow greater religious toleration. Thus the religious divisions which had been a key factor in the political life of England before the civil war and Interregnum continued to disrupt the nation after the Restoration,” (*Shapers of English Calvinism 1660-1714*, 21). See also Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldin, eds. *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990) and Muriel C. MacClendon, Joseph P. Ward, and Michael MacDonald, eds., *Protestant Identities: Religion, Society, and Self-Fashioning in Post-Restoration England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

salvation.” This language of *sola fide*, explicitly rejecting works, was common among the Evangelicals. It is easily seen in such contemporary works as Elliot’s *Encouragement for Sinners; or, Righteousness attainable without Works*.⁶⁶⁶

According to Seagrave, the “Old Divinity” began to recede in England during the reign of Charles I. He noted that “it is observable, since the Time of *Archbishop Laud*,” that the clergy “have taken up a *different* Language.” This language, Seagraves argued, was different in fact from that contained in the article “Of Free-Will” in the Thirty-Nine Articles.⁶⁶⁷ Therefore it was counter to the English Reformers. What he provides in his letter to the people of England is a history of the decline of what he considered authentic Anglicanism.

It is observable, these *Old Principles* are still to be found amongst Dissenters, in a good Measure; which, I fear, may be Part of the Reason why the *Clergy* have drop’d the Use of them. In regard these Doctrines [of the Reformation] were the Principles and Language of the *Dissenters*, and others, who follow’d the Standard of the Parliament against King CHARLES the First; . . . yet, at the *Restoration* of King CHARLES the Second, the Resentment which took Place against the Persons of the *Dissenters*, and ran high, I apprehend, led the Church *Clergy*, not only to be angry with the *Men*, but to forsake their *Principles* too, though right and innocent in themselves, and afore-time held in common amongst all Protestants.”⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁶ Rack highlights the tension even among Calvinists over the doctrine of justification by faith alone, arguing that the Presbyterians spoke out against the Evangelical emphasis on the doctrine. See Henry D. Rack, “Survival and Revival: John Bennet, Methodism, and the Old Dissent” in *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America c. 1750-c. 1950, Essays in Honour of W. R. Ward*, ed. Keith Robbins (New York: Basil and Blackwell, 1990), 1-23. He wrote: “Presbyterians, like Anglicans in the 1740s, were very distrustful of teachers of justification by faith for fear that this would mean devaluing good works, and the risk of antinomian breaches of the moral law,” (p. 3).

⁶⁶⁷ Seagrave, *A Letter to the People of England*, 19.

⁶⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

Although correct in terms of a rising latitudinariansim after the Civil War, the above description, like the description provided more recently by Wallace, misses the Catholic elements within the Church of England that not only existed before Henry VIII, but remained an integral part of Anglican theology and practice.

Restorationists of a Different Sort

Richard Hooker in his seminal work on the English Church, the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, wrote in the sixteenth century that “it is out of doubt that the first state of things was best, that in the prime of Christian religion faith was soundest.” This primitivist principle, or affection for the early church as a pristine period of Christian faith, is what motivated Hooker to argue that “therefore it must needs follow, that custom, laws, and ordinances devised since are not so good for the Church of Christ, but the best way is to cut off later inventions, and to reduce things unto the ancient state wherein at the first they were.”⁶⁶⁹ This attempt to return to an “ancient state” of purity marked the Augustan age as much as it did the Reformers. The eighteenth century was an attempt to return to “a better state.” In Wesley and the Evangelicals we simply see two views of what that ancient state might have looked like.

The Augustan Age has been described as an age of classicism. The attempt to revive an ancient culture was ubiquitous both inside and outside of the Church. Forsaith claimed that “in art and architecture, politics and physic, society frequently looked over its shoulder to some past

⁶⁶⁹ Richard Hooker, *The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker with an Account of His Life and Death by Isaac Walton*. Arranged by the Rev. John Keble MA. 7th edition revised by the Very Rev. R.W. Church and the Rev. F. Paget (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888). 3 vols. Vol. 1. Ch. ii. 2.

and primitive golden age.”⁶⁷⁰ For Forsaith, the biblicism of the Evangelical Revival was an outgrowth of this concern.

Ted Campbell, in his book *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, describes an entire religious context in search of reviving an age of ancient purity:

English theologians of this period stressed the revival of “classical” early Christian practices and theology. Conservative Anglicans claimed to have revived the polity of ancient episcopalianism and the theology of the earliest ecumenical councils. Latitudinarians appealed to early Christianity for models of diversity in religious establishments.⁶⁷¹

Even the Neo-Arians and the Deists joined the restorationist parade and, as Campbell describes, “tried to show that the most primitive Christians either regarded Jesus as a lesser divine figure, or as a merely human teacher.”⁶⁷² The restorationist impulse was pervasive.

Robert Ingram has argued in his recent book on Archbishop Secker that the Archbishop was at heart a restorationist reformer. This reform, however, has been seen until recently against the modern assumption that reform meant progress rather than restoration. According to Ingram, Secker should be seen as one of the key restorationist reformers of the eighteenth century, implementing reforms of the clergy, restoring orthodoxy to a place of dominance, and attempting to move the parochial system of England toward efficiency.⁶⁷³ Secker placed heavy emphasis on biblical knowledge and orthodox teachings. In 1762, he delayed the ordination of one aspiring to

⁶⁷⁰ Forsaith, *Unexamined Labours*, 21.

⁶⁷¹ Ted A. Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991), 2.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

⁶⁷³ See Ingram, *Religion, Reform and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century*, 45.

holy orders because he simply felt that the applicant could not answer questions “that the average parishioner should already know about the scriptures.”⁶⁷⁴ According to Secker, “promoting religious knowledge and practice is not only the express design of all church-government, but a matter (would God it were well considered) of great importance to the state.”⁶⁷⁵

This restorationist milieu, pervasive as it was, was obviously not uniform in its implementation, or in its insistence on what period or interpretation of certain periods should take precedence over others. It is one thing to argue for a return to the practices of the early church and another to implement that ideal. Wesley, for instance, would argue for the use of pre-Constantinian Christianity, while the majority of Evangelicals would be happy to use Augustine of Hippo.

The connection for Wesley can be seen in the High Church’s specific use of the early Church Fathers. Campbell has written that Wesley “believed the earlier Christian writers to have had greater piety and holiness than later ones, and thought that for that reason God had given the earlier Christians more aid in avoiding delusions.”⁶⁷⁶ This can be seen clearly in his sermon “On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel” (1777) when Wesley described Methodism as “the *religion of the primitive church*, of the whole church in the purest ages,” and argued that this primitive church was “clearly expressed in the small remains of Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., 78-79.

⁶⁷⁵ Thomas Secker, *Lectures on the Catechism of the Church of England; with a Discourse on Confirmation*, eds. Beilby Porteus and George Stinton (London: 1799), 7-8.

⁶⁷⁶ Campbell, *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity*, 47.

Polycarp, . . . seen more at large in the writings of Tertullian, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Cyprian.” Even in the fourth century this purity, according to Wesley was “found in the works of Chrysostom, Basil, Ephrem Syrus, and Macarius.”⁶⁷⁷ Apart from the omission of Irenaeus, this was Wesley’s standard roster of those Church Fathers who he claimed represented the purest age of the church.⁶⁷⁸

What this list of early Church Fathers provides is a key connection to the continuing influence of High Church Anglicanism on Wesley. Like any good High Churchman, Wesley will mention the Anglican standards and in the next breath the Church Fathers.⁶⁷⁹ Robert Cornwall describes this High Church Anglican fascination with the early Church Fathers and the scholarship that it produced as “as a bridge between the Caroline divines of the early and mid-seventeenth century and the Oxford Movement of the nineteenth century.”⁶⁸⁰ For these High Churchmen, the primitive church was the “authoritative interpreter of scripture, the final arbitrator in doctrinal disputes, and as a model of Christian piety and discipline.”⁶⁸¹ These High Churchman were looking to the early church and the early Church Fathers to find that Catholic pattern to emulate.

⁶⁷⁷ *Works*, 3:586.

⁶⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, see fn. 31.

⁶⁷⁹ For an example see the same sermon, *Works*, 3:582 and 586.

⁶⁸⁰ Robert D. Cornwall, “The Search for the Primitive Church: The Use of Early Church Fathers in the High Church Anglican Tradition, 1680-1745,” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 59:3 (1990), 303.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*

In his great debate with Cambridge don Conyers Middleton, Wesley defended Christian antiquity and argued for its place within a properly ordered understanding of the Christian faith. Middleton attempted to undermine the credibility of the Church Fathers and argue against the continuation of miracles.⁶⁸² Wesley's strong support for the early church as arbiter came through loudly in his reply, as did his Anti-Romanism.

(1.)The Scriptures are a complete rule of faith and practice; and they are clear in all necessary points. And yet their clearness does not prove, that they need not be explained; nor their completeness, that they need not be enforced. (2.) The esteeming the writings of the first three centuries, not equal with, but next to, the Scriptures, never carried any man yet into dangerous errors, nor probably ever will. But it has brought many out of dangerous errors, and particularly out of the errors of Popery.⁶⁸³

Wesley's sentiments sound very similar to those of Thomas Brett, whose work on liturgy Wesley is known to have read.⁶⁸⁴ Brett, a High Churchman of the period, wrote two books on the necessity of tradition for understanding the scriptures. These included his *Tradition Necessary to Explain and Interpret the Holy Scriptures* (1718), and *A Farther Proof of the Necessity of Tradition, to Explain and Interpret the Holy Scriptures* (1720). While Wesley would not have agreed with Brett's insistence that the scriptures alone do not contain everything necessary to salvation, the influence of Brett comes through in Wesley's writings as seen in the letter to Conyers Middleton.

⁶⁸² See Conyers Middleton, *A Free Enquiry in to the Miraculous Powers, which are Supposed to have Existed in the Christian Church, from the Earliest Ages, through Several Successive Centuries. By which it is shown that we have no sufficient reason to believe, upon the authority of the Primitive Fathers, that any such powers were continued to the church after the days of the Apostles* (London: 1747).

⁶⁸³ *Works* (Jackson) 10:14.

⁶⁸⁴ Special thanks to Randy Maddox for providing information on Wesley's reading lists.

One High Churchman with whom Wesley found greater affinity was William Beveridge, bishop of St. Asaph, and a student of the early church. Beveridge “grounded his doctrinal formulations in scripture, ‘consonant with right reason’ and confirmed by belief and practice of the primitive church.”⁶⁸⁵ In his sermon “Christ’s Resurrection the Cause of our Justification,” Beveridge argued along the lines of any good Calvinist that no one could “merit or deserve to be accounted righteous before God” and rejected any notion that one could save themselves through good works. Beveridge argued “we are accounted righteous before God, not for our own works or deservings; and it is as contrary to the plain and express words of scripture, where it is said once and again, *by the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified.*”⁶⁸⁶ Upon a cursory reading, it is easy to place Beveridge within the Reformed Anglicanism of the Evangelicals. Yet what Beveridge had written was not a treatise on justification by faith alone, but a treatise against the ancient heresy of Pelagianism. Similarly, Wesley would provide a means of describing his soteriology, or Way of Salvation, while similarly dodging the extremes of faith alone or works-righteousness very much in line with Beveridge’s own work.

Wesley’s defense of the Church Fathers and the High Church’s insistence on their continued relevance as a pattern for emulation is seen most clearly in his debate with Middleton. In Wesley’s *Journal* for Monday, January 2, 1749 he wrote, “I had designed to set out with a friend

⁶⁸⁵ See William Beveridge, *Ecclesia Anglicana Ecclesia Catholica; or the Doctrine of the Church of England Consonant to Scripture, Reason, and the Fathers in a Discourse upon the Thirty-nine Articles Agreed upon in the Convocation held at London MDLXII* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1847).

⁶⁸⁶ William Beveridge, “Sermon LXXIV. Christ’s Resurrection the Cause of our Justification” in *The Works of the Right Reverend Father in God, Dr. William Beveridge, . . . Containing [sic] all his sermons, as well [as] those publish’d by himself, vol. 1* (London: 1729), 615.

for Rotterdam. But being much pressed to answer Dr. Middleton's book against the Fathers, I postponed my voyage and spent almost twenty days in that unpleasant employment."⁶⁸⁷ During that "unpleasant employment" Wesley read the work of Jean Daillé, a seventeenth-century French Protestant pastor whose treatise, written first in French and translated into English in 1651 as *A Treatise concerning the Right Use of the Fathers in the Decision of the Controversies that are at This day in Religion* was very much like Middleton's. Daillé's treatise, according to Ward, did not encourage respect for the Fathers but was congenial to much eighteenth-century opinion.⁶⁸⁸ Wesley wrote concerning Daillé, "I soon saw what occasion that good man had given to the enemies of God to blaspheme, and that Dr. Middleton in particular has largely used that work in order to overthrow the whole Christian system."⁶⁸⁹

Wesley's own *A Letter to the Reverend Doctor Conyers Middleton Occasioned by his late "Free Inquiry"* uses an arsenal of Early Fathers to combat Middleton, from Hermas to Irenaeus to Justin Martyr. His primary concern in the *Letter* is to contest Middleton's denial of the continuation of spiritual gifts post-apostolic age. Middleton's concern, which he explicitly mentions, is that the continuation of such gifts would give credence to the Roman Catholic position, they being the largest voice for the continuation of the miraculous via the lives of the saints and miracles

⁶⁸⁷ *Works*, 20:262.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, fn. 15. Ward refers to C.J. Abbey and J.H. Overton's *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London: 1878), 1:165.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

associated with the Sacraments. What the letter provides is a glimpse into Wesley's attachment to liturgical practices of a High Church bent.

Based on the early church, Wesley argues for the High Church custom of mixing water with the wine at the Sacrament.⁶⁹⁰ He also insists on the benefits of prayers for the dead, although in an attempt to separate himself from the Roman doctrine of purgatory, Wesley claims that "it is far from certain that, 'the purpose of this was to procure relief and refreshment to the departed souls in some intermediate state of expiatory pains;' or that 'this was the general opinion of those times.'"⁶⁹¹ He argued with Middleton that by means of prayers for the dead, "God would shortly accomplish the number of his elect and hasten his kingdom," and anointing the sick with oil "you will not easily prove to be any corruptions at all."⁶⁹² Even in what is known by historical theologians as Wesley's most "Protestant" period his High Church views are easily seen.

Wesley's debates with his fellow Evangelicals over issues of predestination and perfectionism show his debt to the High Churchmen of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. What they make plain are direct connections between his own arguments against predestination in the eighteenth century and those of the English "Arminians" of the early seventeenth. Wesley's avowal that the doctrine of reprobation cannot be separated from predestination, or supported by scripture and tradition, along with insistence that the doctrine of

⁶⁹⁰ *Works* (Jackson) 10:8-9.

⁶⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*, 10.

predestination makes God into a tyrant, have direct correlations to his seventeenth century predecessors.

Wallace describes the increase of “a more moderate theology of grace than that enshrined in Reformed scholasticism” arising at the end of the sixteenth century in England “partly under revived humanist impulses emanating from the Continent and partly from a renewed patristic interest.”⁶⁹³ This more moderate theology, Wallace argues, was simply a part of the eventual unravelling of Reformed hegemony over the Church of England and would include such leaders as Lancelot Andrewes and John Downe. Andrews and Downe, along with Hooker, represent for Wallace a new “emerging ‘Anglican’ school of theology.” Under Charles I and Laud, this moderate Anglican school would turn into outright opposition to Calvinism.

Similarities can be seen between Wesley and many of the major players of this Arminian assault on the Reformed position. Wesley’s “responsible grace” is much in line with the theology of Richard Montague (whom Charles I made bishop of Chichester) in his *A Gag for the New Gospell? No: A New Gagg for an Old Goose* (1624). Philip Benedict argues that the publication of Montague’s treatise during the reign of James I “implies that there balance may have already have been tipping toward the Laudians by the last years of James’s reign.”⁶⁹⁴

While Reformed Anglicans of the period attempted to label their opponents as followers of Arminius, Benedict argued that these opponents of predestination, whom he claims by the turn of

⁶⁹³ Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, 72.

⁶⁹⁴ Philip Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 388.

the seventeenth century included Richard Neile, Lancelot Andrewes, John Overall, John Buckridge, John Cosin, and William Laud were influenced more by native anti-predestinarians such as Peter Baro.⁶⁹⁵ It was the native anti-predestinarians, represented by those who had either a more Catholic vision of the Reformation or had silently rejected it, who provide the continuity of the Catholic stream within Anglicanism. It is well known that Bishops Stephen Gardiner, Cuthbert Tunstall, and Edmund Bonner welcomed the reign of Mary because they thought that the Reformation had gone too far.⁶⁹⁶

Archbishop Laud declared that the “doctrine of universal atonement was the ‘constant doctrine of the Catholic Church in all ages, and no error of Arminius,’” adding that the idea that “God reprobated from eternity the greater part of mankind” was an “opinion my very soul abominates.”⁶⁹⁷ Likewise, Thomas Jackson, an Oxford theologian connected with Laud, declared his belief in the possibility of falling from grace, and referred to the doctrine of reprobation as “an idolatrous and blasphemous imagination,” asserting that Christ died for all.⁶⁹⁸

Throughout his life, Wesley would make claims identical to those made by Laud and Jackson. In his “Thoughts Concerning Gospel Ministers,” Wesley wrote:

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., 386.

⁶⁹⁶ See Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Tudor Prelates and Politics, 1536-1558* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953).

⁶⁹⁷ William Laud, *The History of the Troubles and Tryall of the Most Reverend Father in God and Blessed Martyr, William Laud, Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury, Wrote by Himself During His Imprisonment in the Tower; to Which is Prefixed the Diary of His Own Life* (London[?]:1694), p. 14. etc.

⁶⁹⁸ Wallace, *Puritans and Predestination*, 91. See Thomas Jackson’s *Commentaries on the Apostles’ Creed* (London[?]:1627).

Let it be particularly observed, if the gospel be “glad tidings of great salvation which shall be unto all people,” then those only are, in the full sense, Gospel Ministers who proclaim the “great salvation;” that is, salvation from all (both inward and outward) sin, into “all the mind that was in Christ Jesus;” and likewise proclaim offers of this salvation to every child of man. This honourable title, when it is given to any but those who testify “that God willeth all men to be saved,” and “to be perfect as their Father which is in heaven is perfect.”⁶⁹⁹

Wesley would never back down from his belief in the universal reach of God’s saving work. Nor would he accept that belief in predestination could be separated from reprobation. He claimed that “if you narrowly observe, unconditional election cannot appear without the cloven foot of reprobation.”⁷⁰⁰

Wesley argued vehemently in *Predestination Calmly Considered* (1752) that to believe in predestination is to believe in reprobation, that one ensures the other, and that they stand or fall based on the acceptance of both. Wesley is writing to “my brethren,” an un-named group who have an uncanny resemblance to many of the Evangelical Anglicans, such as John Newton, who in an attempt to describe their evangelical conversions used the language of election because it best fit their understanding of the impotence they felt in the face of converting grace.⁷⁰¹

In Wesley’s view, the scriptures did not support the doctrine of reprobation, but could be used to refute the doctrine with a cursory reading of the biblical text. He provided a litany of biblical references that he claimed countered the understanding of an eternal divine decree that designated the saved and the damned, and wrote that “you are sensible, these are but a very small

⁶⁹⁹ *Works (Jackson)*, 10:456.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 10:209.

⁷⁰¹ Hindmarsh, *John Newton*, 160.

part of the scriptures which might be brought on each of these heads. But they are enough; and they require no comment: Taken in their plain, easy, and obvious sense, they abundantly prove, that there is not, cannot be, any such thing as unconditional reprobation.”⁷⁰²

In an attempt to undermine the doctrine of predestination, Wesley chose a target that was not only opprobrious to the broader public, but at the same time steered his argument away from a direct attack on the Evangelicals. It is not surprising, however, to see the Oxford logician challenge what he saw as the weakest link in a Calvinist-inspired chain in order to overthrow the doctrine of predestination. He appears to have little concern whether his opponents were full Calvinists or moderate ones with “warmed hearts” much like his own. At the center of Wesley’s argument was his understanding of God. Hempton has noted that “Wesley could not conceive of a God who had determined everything in advance or of human spirituality that was mere acquiescence.”⁷⁰³ The doctrine of predestination simply countered everything that Wesley knew about God. Wesley, it appears, had been schooled well in the theology of the Caroline Divines.

Divergent Visions

At the heart of the divide between Wesley and the Evangelicals was a vision for the restoration of “vital religion” in the Church of England, a divergence of theological and historical outlook. The attempt on the part of the Evangelicals to revive the “Old Divinity” did not sit well with the strange amalgamation of High Churchmanship and Pietism found in Wesley. The

⁷⁰² Ibid., 215-216.

⁷⁰³ Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, 57.

“Calvinist Controversy” of the 1770s would explode on the scene after the publication of Wesley’s 1770 Conference Minutes, but this explosion took place within an already divided Revival. The arguments of the 1770s had already been heard as early as the 1730s. Whitefield’s death just before the publication of Wesley’s “Minutes” did not help the situation, as Wesley’s friendship with Whitefield had often smoothed over theological spats in the past. The “Calvinist Controversy” took place well after the Evangelical Anglicans had begun to form themselves into a distinctly regular element within the Church. Issues of polity had already separated these two groups.

Theologically, what these two groups represented at a fundamental level were divergent streams within the Church of England itself. The Evangelicals, as a group, represented a Reformed vision of Christianity stemming back to the Puritans and the English Reformers, while Wesley represented a Catholic one representing the High Church and the Caroline Divines. These visions provided the lenses through which each came to understand the very heart of the Revival itself, the definition of conversion. These two visions would continue to dominate the Church of England well into the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION: CONSTRAINED TO DEVIATE

O Almighty God, who hast built thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect for St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles

The complexities involved in Wesley's relationship with the Evangelical Anglicans are many. The relationship of this one maverick Anglican with a whole host of Evangelicals each attempting to find his way through the maze of the eighteenth-century Church is bound to involve numerous issues. There is not one particular reason why Wesley and his Evangelical colleagues did not unite their work, nor one reason why they silently diverge after 1770. No one issue, whether the use of lay preachers, political and ecclesiastical pressure, theological controversy, or parochial boundaries provides the key to answering these question. A combination of them all is necessary to see the broader picture of a complex relationship that led to division.⁷⁰⁴ With differing trajectories both theological and practical against the backdrop of ecclesiastical and political pressure, a united evangelical work faced multifaceted hardships that it simply could not overcome.

Regardless of various setbacks on his push toward uniting the Evangelical clergy, Wesley did not lose hope in a united Evangelical work until the end of the 1760s. For that reason, the

⁷⁰⁴ For a description of the commitment to unity among many leaders of the Revival, see James L. Schwenk, *Catholic Spirit: Wesley, Whitefield, and the Quest for Evangelical Unity in Eighteenth-Century British Methodism*. Pietism and Wesleyan Studies 26 (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2008). Schwenk stays clear of many of the hot-button theological issues known to have caused divergence among these leaders.

focus of this study culminates at 1770. Wesley's last push toward union began early in the decade in 1764 with a letter that he sent to "forty or fifty clergymen" outlining a united Evangelical effort. Howell Harris had apparently spearheaded the work the year before. Baker notes that Harris "spent the better part of three months touring England 'striving for universal union and for the [Evangelical] clergy to meeting each other.'"⁷⁰⁵

Wesley met in the Spring of 1764 with Evangelical Richard Conyers of Helmsley and with Lady Huntingdon to discuss his dream of a union, and despite the insistence of Conyers that his efforts to unite the clergy were impractical,⁷⁰⁶ Wesley took up the charge with renewed energy. After reading the words of á Kempis which in 1735 he had translated—"Wait upon the Lord, do manfully, be of good courage, do not despair, do not fly, but with constancy expose both *body* and *soul* for the glory of God"⁷⁰⁷—he was convinced he was called to bring about an Evangelical union.

The list of the clergy Wesley addressed are provided in Curnock's edition of the *Journal* and supplemented in Ward and Heitzenrater's volumes of the *Journal and Diaries* in the Bicentennial Edition. They include a "who's who" of the Evangelical clergy. It is not clear, however, that the letter was sent to all of them at the same time. Telford's edition of the letters indicates that Newton may not have received his copy until 1766.⁷⁰⁸ Writing from Scarborough, Wesley noted in his journal entry for April 19, 1764, "I wrote a letter today, which after some time I sent to forty or

⁷⁰⁵ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 189-190.

⁷⁰⁶ See *Works*, 21:458. Wesley mentions Conyers's hesitancy in his letter to the clergy. He describes Conyers as "objecting the impossibility of ever effecting such a union."

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁸ See *Letters* (Telford), 4:236, fn. 1 (April 19, 1764).

fifty clergymen.” He provided not only the preface to the letter, but the letter he had written, and three responses to his proposal when he published the journal extract four years later.⁷⁰⁹

Wesley’s proposal was a loose confederation of Evangelicals agreeing to meet together for their mutual benefit. At the core of his proposal was a plea to end fighting within the group. He wanted the clergy to unite in the face of rising ecclesiastical challenges to “*speak* respectfully, honourably, kind of each other; *defend* each other’s character; speak all the good we can of each other; recommend each other where we have influence” and likely the most controversial proposal, to “help the other on in his work and *enlarge* his influence by all the honest means he can.”⁷¹⁰ It appears from the proposal, however, that Wesley himself would be the foundation upon which the union would be secured. This aspect of the proposal by itself would have discouraged the participation of most of the regular clergy. Already the Methodists under Wesley’s care had caused great headaches for those wishing to work within the confines of the Established Church. The Methodists were suspected of schismatic tendencies, the lay preachers roamed over Evangelical parishes, and Walker’s admonition to “be very civil to the Methodists, but have nothing to do with them” seemed, as Baker noted, the typical attitude of most of the Evangelical clergy.⁷¹¹

Wesley’s letter, originally sent to Lord Dartmouth, begins with an historical sketch of the Revival that places him and his brother at its center. He wrote, “Some years since, God began a great work in England, but the labourers were few. At first those few were of one heart, but it was

⁷⁰⁹ *Works*, 21:454.

⁷¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21:457.

⁷¹¹ Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 189.

not so long. First one fell off, then another, and another, till not two of us were left together in the work beside my brother and me.”⁷¹² This history of the Revival, much like the history he provided in his sermon “On Laying the Foundations” and in his letter to the father of William Morgan at the very beginning of the movement, is distinctly and yet surprisingly centered on the work of Wesleyan Methodism. Wesley appears entirely oblivious to the Evangelical fraternity that through common connections, clergy associations, and shared controversy had grown almost organically to unite the Evangelicals and give them a network of support within the Church.

Wesley continued the letter by stating that “as labourers increased, disunion increased” such that “at length those who are not only brethren in Christ, but fellow-labourers in his gospel, had no more connection or fellowship with each other than Protestants have with Papists.”⁷¹³ He asks, “But ought this to be?” It should be noted that Wesley made this claim just months before the 1764 conference in Bristol, discussed in a previous chapter, where many Evangelicals came to discuss the use and purpose of lay preachers and to ask Wesley specifically to remove them from their parishes.⁷¹⁴ His insistence that Evangelical cooperation had waned may indicate the impact that the deaths of both Walker and Grimshaw had made on him, together with his brother’s continued withdrawal from the work of the Methodist connexion.

Wesley specifically names thirty-six of the likely recipients of the proposal within the letter itself. His list includes both regular and irregular clergy, although the list is dominated by regular

⁷¹² *Works*, 21:456.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁴ See Chapter 7.

clergymen. The list includes Evangelicals of various theological stripes. Wesley includes Perronet and Sellon, with whom he cooperated on a regular basis, as well as Adam and Romaine who were known to have reservations about Methodism and its trajectory. What Wesley outlines are the three doctrines which he claims should unite the Evangelicals: original sin, justification by faith, and holiness of heart and life, to which he adds “provided their life be answerable to their doctrine.”⁷¹⁵

The heart of the letter describes what Wesley’s proposed Evangelical union would look like:

“But *what union* would you desire among these?” Not an union in *opinions*. They might agree or disagree touching absolute decrees on the one hand and perfection on the other. Not an union in *expressions*. These may still speak of the “imputed righteousness,” and those of the “merits” of Christ. Not an union with regard to *outward order*. Some may still remain *quite regular* and *partly irregular*. But these things being as they are, as each is persuaded in his own mind, is it not a most desirable thing. . . This is the *union* which I have long sought after.⁷¹⁶

Wesley had desired this unification of the Evangelical clergy for many years. In a letter to Samuel Furly in May 1762, Wesley not only discussed Venn’s book “concerning gospel ministers,” but declared that he thought it “high imprudence for any of those who preach the essential gospel truths to stand aloof from each other,” adding that “there ought to be the most cordial and avowed union between them.”⁷¹⁷ He admits, however, that the shyness had never been on his part, and this was true. Although some Evangelicals, such as Haweis and Romaine, met with

⁷¹⁵ *Works*, 21:456.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21:457.

⁷¹⁷ *Letters* (Telford), 4:182 (To Samuel Furly, May 21, 1762).

Wesley to discuss union earlier, the Evangelicals were united by this time in their local clerical associations, or through Lady Huntingdon and Lord Dartmouth. They were increasingly united in their passion to serve faithfully their respective parishes.

The power that both Huntingdon and Dartmouth yielded to influence nervous bishops to ordain Evangelicals or to secure parish incumbencies for unemployed “gospel ministers,” made them essential to the work of the early Revival within the Church and a unifying force at least until Huntingdon herself dissented. The Evangelicals, except for a very few, remained in the parish structure of the Church when she left. Apart from Wesley, it was Lady Huntingdon who attempted a more formal union of those involved in the Revival. As early as 1742, Whitefield approached the Countess about the possibility of backing a proposal to unify the Calvinist and Wesleyan arms of the Revival.⁷¹⁸ She almost pulled off a “great coup,” as Fletcher noted in a letter to Charles Wesley, for attempting to unite the Evangelical clergy after the disastrous 1764 conference of the Wesleyan Methodists.⁷¹⁹

Lord Dartmouth, as a powerful politician and under George III and Secretary of State for the American Department, was, instrumental in “securing ordination and important appointments for the early Evangelical clergy.”⁷²⁰ Davies notes that it was through Lord Dartmouth’s efforts that “John Newton was ordained, Henry Venn went to Huddlesfield,

⁷¹⁸ See Cook, *Selina*, 73–74.

⁷¹⁹ Forsaith, *Unexampled Labours*, 197 (To Charles Wesley, 22 Aug. 1764).

⁷²⁰ See Davies, *Early Cornish Evangelicals*, 178; and Balleine, *History of the Evangelical Party*, 58. Dartmouth’s seventh son, Edward Legge, would be made Bishop of Oxford in 1816.

Robinson to Leicester, Stillingfleet to Hotham, and later Newton to Olney.”⁷²¹

Richard Conyers’ caution to Wesley of the impractical nature of his proposal was more prophetic than Wesley wanted to admit. Yet the issues that divided Wesley and the Evangelicals were explicitly named in the letter. Wesley attempted to brush over issues of regularity and irregularity, yet these issues—“opinions,” “expressions,” and “outward order”—were at the heart of Evangelical reluctance to be associated with Wesley and his movement. With their own place in the Church so often questioned, it is surprising that they continued to entertain his proposal for union at all. Wesley, as one of the leading irregular figures of the Revival and head of an expanding network of societies, was too much of a liability for the already marginalized Evangelicals to form such a public bond. His waning friendship with Venn and the subsequent dissolution of their Huddersfield agreement was likely fresh on the minds of many Evangelicals, as was the continuing struggle to train and ordain Evangelicals for the work within the Church. If the Evangelicals can be said to have united behind any clergyman, they would have seen themselves united by clergy such as Walker, Newton, and finally Charles Simeon.

By the end of the decade, as described earlier, the political force of rising Tory influence under George III, the reaction against dissent and irregularity caused by the Feather’s Lane petition, and the very public expulsion of six Methodists from Oxford for irregular activity would pressure the Evangelicals to prove their loyalty to the Establishment. Fletcher, a keen observer of the political scene although not a native Englishman, wrote to Charles Wesley just one month after the ascension of George III: “I suppose by the proclamation which I have just seen in the

⁷²¹ Ibid.

Gazette that our young King will really deserve the title of Josiah! What happiness for the nation even though it seems an accidental misfortune for the M[ethodists]!”⁷²²

The Evangelicals would continue their efforts to be seen as a regular part of the Church and her parochial system. Although most of them in this early period of the Revival would never ascend the ladder of ecclesiastical preferment, the Evangelicals of this period would carve out niches which in the next century would serve as strongholds of an Evangelical Party. By the first part of the next century, the Evangelicals would continue in their loyalty to the Church such that, as Bebbington notes, they would become loyal to the institution itself.⁷²³

Against the rising tides of regularity, loyalty, and a vision of evangelicalism as a movement for the renewal of the Church through her own structures, Wesley’s vision of renewal through irregularity and an ecclesial substructure became less convincing. His movement, centered so strongly on personality, was seen as on the cusp of dissent. Many, such as Adam, believed that it was already dissenting.

The three responses that Wesley received to his letter seeking an evangelical union were from Richard Hart, Vicar of St. George's, Bristol, Walter Sellon of Breedon on the Hill, Leicestershire, and Vincent Perronet of Shoreham. Hart, the vicar of an Evangelical parish that had been created to minister to the coal-miners of Kingswood, sought for the unity of evangelical groups throughout his ministry.⁷²⁴ Both Sellon and Perronet worked closely with the Wesley

⁷²² Forsaith, *Unexampled Labours*, 122, (To Charles Wesley, 7 Nov. 1760).

⁷²³ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 97.

brothers and their responses reflect that close personal connection. Two of Perronet's sons served as lay itinerant ministers within Wesley's connexion. None of the leading figures of the Revival within the Church responded in writing to Wesley's proposal, nor do we have evidence that they approached him in person to discuss it.

As the decade wore on and responses to Wesley's overtures toward union met a silent response, his own attitude toward the Evangelicals began to sour. Throughout the period he tried to coax Fletcher out of his Madeley parish, arguing that Fletcher would be more effective in irregularity. Wesley never seems to have felt that the parish system provided a proper context in which to promote fully the gospel. In a letter to Adam in the fall of 1755, Wesley argued that only one regular Evangelical had been successful working in the parish system of the Church, Samuel Walker. He wrote that he knew of Piers, Perronet, Manning, "and several other regular clergymen who do preach the genuine gospel, but to no effect at all."⁷²⁵ Expecting push-back on his assertion, he wrote: "If it be said, 'Has not Mr. Grimshaw and Mr. Baddeley?' No, not one, till they were *irregular*; till both the one and other formed irregular societies, and took in laymen to assist them. Can there be a stronger proof that God is pleased with *irregular* even more than with *regular* preaching?"⁷²⁶ Wesley never seemed to stray from this negative view of the efficacy of a regular ministry. His reaction in 1767 to the suggestion that the real work of the Revival was being done by the "awakened clergy" is significant. It shows a growing impatience for regular Evangelicalism.

⁷²⁴ See *DEB*, 1:527.

⁷²⁵ *Works*, 26:610-611 (Letter to Thomas Adam, October 31, 1755). Baker notes that Manning had attended conferences in both 1747 and 1748, 611, fn. 14.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, 611.

He wrote to Evangelical Joseph Townsend: “How many has any one of them convinced or converted since Whitsuntide I fear, when we come to particulars, there will be small room to boast. If you put things on this issue, ‘Whose word does God now bless?’ the matter will soon be determined.”⁷²⁷

By 1768 Wesley’s impatience for Evangelical regularity was seen in his sardonic letter to Thomas Adam, as well as another that same year to Fletcher.⁷²⁸ In this letter to Fletcher he nearly scolds him for his connections to Evangelicals Madan, Romaine, and Whitefield, and declares that “the conversing with these I have rarely found to be profitable to my soul. Rather it has damped my desires, it has cooled my resolutions, and I have commonly left them with a dry, dissipated spirit.” Wesley was losing patience with those whom he designated “the genteel Methodists.”⁷²⁹ Finally, at the conference of 1769, he had given up on his plans for an evangelical union. In an address to the Methodist conference, he called the Evangelicals a “rope of sand” and declared, “I can do no more.”⁷³⁰ His attention turned from the Evangelical clergymen to the continuing work of his lay preachers and the connexion that he had built. From that point on, his focus would not waver.

⁷²⁷ *Letters* (Telford), 5:59 (To Joseph Townsend, August, 1-3, 1767). Ironically, Townsend was a very effective Anglican clergyman in Pewsey, Wiltshire, where he served from 1764 until his death in 1816.

⁷²⁸ For the letter to Adam, see *Letters* (Telford), 5:97-99 (July 19, 1768); for Fletcher, 5:82-85 (March 20, 1768).

⁷²⁹ *Letters* (Telford), 5:83 (To John Fletcher, March 20, 1768).

⁷³⁰ *Works*, 10:377.

The history of evangelicalism in the latter part of the eighteenth century can be seen as a period of institutional adjustment and alignment. By 1770, the Evangelical clergy and John Wesley's Methodism had essentially diverged. The controversies of the 1770s simply highlight the theological divides of an already divided group. With Huntingdon's departure into dissent in 1779, the Evangelicals remained within the Church as the arbiters of the Revival with a renewed emphasis on regularity. Wesley's ordinations for America in 1784 simply represented the next logical step in Wesley's gradual move toward dissent. The year 1770 does not represent a date after which Wesley and Evangelical Anglicans cease to speak; it represents a point after which it is clear that the Evangelicals and the Wesleyan Methodists have taken different paths. The Evangelicals would go on to become one of the strongest parties within the Church of England. Methodism after the death of the Wesleys became a world-wide movement that nearly rivaled its Anglican parent.

The Evangelical Anglicans were an untamable group that Wesley tried to convert to his revivalistic vision, and as with other groups that he attempted to amalgamate to Methodism his attempt met varied success for various reasons. What sets the Evangelical Anglicans apart from these other groups, which would have included the local preachers, dissenters, Moravians, and others, is the fact that the Evangelical Anglicans served as Wesley's closest link to the broader Church of England that he claimed to love so much. It is within this group, as an ordained clergyman of the Church of England, that Wesley rightly belonged. The gradual loss of contact with the Evangelicals can be seen as the beginning of Wesleyan Methodism's separation from the Church of England.

APPENDIX

Evangelical Anglican clergy during the life of John Wesley (1703-1791)

Name of Clergy	Incumbancy/Appointment	Active Dates during Period
Abdy, William Jarvis (1755-1823)	Staines, Middlesex, curate St. John's Horsley Down, Southwark,	1778-1780 1782-1805
Adam, Thomas (1701-1784)	Wintringham, Lincolnshire	1724-1784
Andrews, John	Stinchcombe, Gloucestershire Marden, Kent	1767-
Atkinson, Christopher	Thorp Arch, Yorkshire	1749-1774
Atkinson, Miles (1741-1811)	Leeds Parish Church Walton-on-the-Hill, Lancashire Leek Kippax	1764-1767 1780-1788 1785-1803 1783-1811
Baddeley, John (1706-1764)	Hayfield, Derbyshire	1748-1764

Barnard, Thomas ⁷³¹ (-1750)	Leeds Grammar School	1712-1750
Bassett, Christopher (-1784)	St. Anne's, Blackfriars, London, curate ⁷³² St. Fagan's near Cardiff, Wales ⁷³³	1775-1778 1778-1784
Bateman, Richard Thomas ⁷³⁴ (1712-1760)	Lylsfrau, Dyfed (then Pembrokeshire) St. Bartholomew the Great, London	
Bayley, Cornelius (1751-1812)	Madeley, curate ⁷³⁵ Deptford, curate ⁷³⁶ St. James's, Manchester	1787-1812
Bennett, John (1765-1750)	North Tamerton, Cornwall Tresmere, Cornwall	1731-1750 1731-1750

⁷³¹ "Barnard's evangelical credentials are questioned by some historians. It is clear that he became a close friend of Lady Elizabeth Hastings and assisted her in her charitable work. Her nephew, George Hastings, became his pupil and boarded with him. George's mother, Lady Hastings, consulted Barnard about her spiritual well-being, and he played an important part in her conversion to Methodism in July 1739. He wrote several long letters of advice to her. Despite this, when he came to write his *Historical Character of . . . Lady Elizabeth Hastings* in 1742 he attacks the Methodists and denied that she had ever been one. His change of heart can possibly be attributed to the marriage of Benj. Ingham and Lady Margaret Hastings, which was unpopular in Yorkshire," (DEB, 60).

⁷³² Curate to William Romaine in London.

⁷³³ "Here he established a Welsh Methodist meeting house, and itinerated with the Methodists throughout Wales. These activities caused him to be passed over for the vicarage of Cardiff, even though it was in the patronage of his father's employers," (DEB, 66).

⁷³⁴ Attended Oxford with John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield.

⁷³⁵ Curate to John Fletcher.

⁷³⁶ Curate to Richard Conyers

	Laneast, Cornwall	1731-1750
Bentley, Roger ⁷³⁷ (-1795)	St. Giles, Camberwell in Surrey, Vicar	1769-1790
Berridge, John ⁷³⁸ (1716-1793)	Staphford, curate Everton	1749-1755 1758-1793
Biddulph, Thomas (1735-1790)	Collwall, Herefordhsire, curate Worcester Padstown, Cornwall Bengeworth, incumbent	1760- -1770 1771-1790 1769-1771
Biddulph, Thomas Tregenna ⁷³⁹ (1763-1838)	Padstow, curate Ditcheat St.Mary-le-Port Wansborough (Wiltshire) St. Mary-le-Port	1785- 1786 1787 1788 1789
Bliss, Thomas R. (1739-1802)	Broadwoodwidge, Devon, curate ⁷⁴⁰ Ashford and Yarnscomb, vicar	1760-1766 1770-1802
Bridges, Nathaniel	Toot Bladon, Oxfordshire, vicar ⁷⁴¹	1778-

⁷³⁷ "Bentley was ordained 20 September 1760 in York. John Thornton, a wealthy friend of early Methodists and evangelicals, attempted to find livings for several of Bentley's contemporaries. Thornton first attempted to place Bentley in the parish of Cottingham near Hull, in 1767. The Bishop of Chester, patron of the living, wrote to the Archbishop of York, enquiring whether there was 'anything of a methodistical cast' about Bentley. The bishop was anxious not to present 'an improper' person under which the category of 'methodistical' clergy evidently fell. Bentley did not get the living." *DEB*, 85.

⁷³⁸ Evangelical conversion in 1756. Began to itinerate two years later.

⁷³⁹ Educated at Truro under George Conon.

⁷⁴⁰ Curate to William Grimshaw.

(1750-1834)	North Moreton, Berkshire Wadenhoe, Northamptonshire	1783-1805
Broughton, Thomas ⁷⁴² (1712-1777)	SPCK, secretary Wotton, Surrey All Hallows, Lombard St., London	1743-1777 1752 1755-
Brown, James ⁷⁴³ (1730-1791)	Bradford-upon-Avon, curate Bristol Grammar School St. Nicholas, lecturer Westharpintree, Somerset, rector Portishead, rector Kinston near Taunton, Chaplain to the Duke of Athol	1752-1759 1759-1763 1763-1765 1761- 1764/5 1764/5 1771-
Browne, Moses (1704-1787)	Weston Favell, curate Olney	1753-1764
Buckley, Edward (1743-1783)	Kippax and Hunslet, curate ⁷⁴⁴ Kippax, vicar ⁷⁴⁵	1767-1770 1770-83
Burnett, George (1734-1793)	Padstow, curate Huddersfield, curate ⁷⁴⁶ Slaithwaite, perpetual curate Elland, vicar ⁷⁴⁷	1759 1759-1761 1761-1793

⁷⁴¹ "Between 1775 and 1783, Bridges was Oxford's most influential evangelical," (*DEB*, 139).

⁷⁴² Oxford Methodist.

⁷⁴³ Leading evangelical among Bristol and Somerset Anglican clergy.

⁷⁴⁴ Was nominated as curate by Henry Crook.

⁷⁴⁵ Helped to provide a meeting-house for the Methodists at Pontefract.

⁷⁴⁶ Curate to Henry Venn.

Cadogan, William Bromley (1751-1797)	St. Giles, Reading ⁷⁴⁸ St. Luke's, Chelsea	1771-1797 1775-1797
Cecil, Richard (1748-1810)	St. Thomas's and All Saints Lewes St. John's Bedford Row, London Held lectureships at: Orange Street, Leicester Fields, Long Acres, St. Margaret's Lothburg, and Christ Church, Spitalfields	1777- 1797/98 1780-1808
Chaplainman, Walter ⁷⁴⁹ (1711-1791)	Master of St John's Hospital, Bath Bristol Cathedral, canon Bradford-upon-Avon, Wiltshire	1735-1745 1745-1754 1754-1791
Clark, Thomas	Chesham Bois, Buckinghamshire	1766-1793
Coetlogon, Charles Edward de (1746-1820)	Marden, Kent, curate Lock Hospital Chaplain, assistant ⁷⁵⁰ Lord Mayor's Chaplain Godstone, Surrey	1770-1772 1772-1789 1789 1794-1820
Collins, Brian	Christ Church, Macclesfield, curate	1781-1782

⁷⁴⁷ "In his vicarage the EIS was formed in 1777 to raise funds for the education of evangelical candidates for the ministry," (*DEB*, 171).

⁷⁴⁸ Fired his evangelical curate at Reading, John Hallward, before his conversion. Later had Erasmus Middleton, one of the six "Methodists" kicked out of Oxford in 1768 as his curate.

⁷⁴⁹ Oxford Methodist

⁷⁵⁰ Assistant to Martin Madan.

Bury ⁷⁵¹ (1754-1807)		
Conon, George ⁷⁵² (1698-1775)	Truro Grammar School	1728-1775
Conyers, Richard ⁷⁵³ (1725-1786)	Kirby Misperton, curate Kirby Misperton, rector Helmsley, rector Deptford	1745-1750 1763-1768 1756-1762 1785-1786
Coulthurst, Henry William ⁷⁵⁴ (1753-1817)	St. Sepulchre's, Cambridge Yelling ⁷⁵⁵ Halifax	1782-1790 1784 1790-1817
Creighton, James (1739-1819)	Dublin Cathedral, curate Swanlimbar London with Wesley	1765 -1783 1783

⁷⁵¹ "A number of bishops refused him orders because of his field-preaching for John Wesley, but he was eventually accepted and became curate to David Simpson at Christ Church. . . He continued, however, to exercise an itinerant ministry for both Wesley and Lady Huntingdon, a work in which he could more freely indulge after inheriting the estate of his uncle, Thomas Irwin Bury at Blankney (Lincolnshire) whose name he then assumed." Wesley Historical Society, Vol. 9. See also, Bury's *An Address to the Higher Ranks of People in the parish of St. Mary, Hull* (1778).

⁷⁵² Instrumental in the conversion of Samuel Walker. George Burnett his assistant at one point, and Thomas Haweis his pupil.

⁷⁵³ Friend of Venn, Madan, and Wesley. His funeral sermon was given by Thomas Scott.

⁷⁵⁴ Came to know Charles Simeon and was a member of the Elland Society.

⁷⁵⁵ Served with Henry Venn.

Crook, Henry ⁷⁵⁶ (1708-1770)	Huddlesfield, Kirk Sandal, and Kippax, curate Hunslit, rector	1735-1745 1740-1770
Crosse, John ⁷⁵⁷ (1739-1816)	Wiltshire, curate The Lock Hospital, London, curate Minister of the chaplainries of Rochdale and Cross-Stone in the parish of Halifax (Father purchased the living) White Chapel, Leeds, minister Bradford, curate	1765-1768 1768- 1774- 1784
Crouch, Isaac ⁷⁵⁸ (1756-1835)	St. Martin's, Worcester, curate ⁷⁵⁹ Winkfield, Wiltshire, curate Billericay, Essex, curate Chiselhampton and Stadhampton, Oxfordshire, curate	1778-1779 1779-1781 1781/3 1783-1797
Crowther, Samuel		

⁷⁵⁶ "He met John Wesley in 1755, and both he and Charles Wesley preached for Crook. John preached for Crook on July 30, 1769. Crook, however, always saw the importance of church order and objected to the increasing exclusiveness of Methodist connexions and to the Wesley's encouragement of lay preachers," (DEB 271).

⁷⁵⁷ See *Memoir of Rev. John Crosse* (London: 1844). Crosse considered leaving the Church of England to join Wesley because of opposition to his ministry within the Church.

⁷⁵⁸ "Crouch was appointed (by Principal Dixon, who was already inclined to countenance evangelicals), vice-principal and bursar at St. Edmund Hall 1783. From 1783 to 1797 he served as curate to Dr. J.W. Peers (another evangelical), at Chiselhampton and Stadhampton, Oxfordshire, as chaplain of Merton College 1796-1817, and as a city lecturer, St. Martin's Carfax, Oxford from 1805," (DEB, 275).

⁷⁵⁹ Curate to James Stillingfleet.

Cuthbert, Edward ⁷⁶⁰ (1746-1803)	Wolingworth, Suffolk, curate Slifford, Essex Longacre Chapel, London, joint- minister Bulphan, rector	1768- 1772-1784 1780-1803 1799
Davy, William (1743-1826)	Moretonhampstead, curate Drewsteighton, curate Winkleigh, rector	1760s? 1785-1825 1825-1826
De Courcy, Richard (1743-1803)	Shawbury, Shropshire, curate Chaplain to Lady Glenorchy Crown Living of St. Alkmund, Shrewsbury	1770 1770 1774-1803
Duchè, James ⁷⁶¹ (1737-1798)	Chaplain at the Asylum for Female Orphans, London	
Dykes, Thomas ⁷⁶² (1761-1847)	Cottingham, curate Barwick-in-Elmet St. John's, Hull, rector and builder	1778 1789-1791 1791-
Easterbrook, Joseph ⁷⁶³	Holy Cross (Temple) Church, Bristol	1779

⁷⁶⁰ One of the founders of the Christian Missionary Society.

⁷⁶¹ In London as an exile from the United States from 1778-1793.

⁷⁶² Connected to William Farish, Henry Jowett, John Venn, and Robert Jarrett. See J. King, *Memoir of the Reverend Thomas Dykes* (1849).

⁷⁶³ Easterbrook was connected to both Fletcher and Wesley. According to A.S. Wood, "He regarded the Methodists as useful auxiliaries to the Establishment and attached his converts to classes," (*DEB*, 342).

(1751-1791)		
Elton, Sir Abraham (1755-1842)	Leicester, curate ⁷⁶⁴	1783
Farish, William ⁷⁶⁵ (1759-1837)	Magdalene College, Cambridge, tutor and fellow	
Farrer, John (1735-1808)	Escomb, curate Bishop Auckland Grammar School, Master Witton le Wear, perpetual curate	1759
Fawcett, James (1752-1831)	St. John's, Cambridge, fellow St. John's, Leeds, curate to Father St. Sepulchre, Cambridge, vicar Norrison Professor of Divinity	1777-1803 1776 1791-1822 1795-1815
Fletcher, John William (1729-1785)	Madeley, vicar	1760-1785
Foster, Henry (1745-1814)	St. Anne's, Blackfriars, London, curate ⁷⁶⁶	1768-

⁷⁶⁴ Ordained in 1783. Curate to Thomas Robinson.

⁷⁶⁵ "He was senior wrangler and became fellow and tutor of Magdalene and thereby played an important part in making the college pre-eminently evangelical," (*DEB*, 378).

⁷⁶⁶ Curate to William Romaine.

	Long Acre Proprietary Chaplain	1780-
Farnks, James (1760-1829)	Haddenham, Cambridgeshire, curate	1787
Furley, Samuel (1732-1795)	Kippax, Yorshire, assistant ⁷⁶⁷ Slaithwaite, perpetual curate ⁷⁶⁸ Roche, Cornwall	1762- 1766
Garden, James ⁷⁶⁹ (d. 1772)	Slingsby, Yorkshire, rector Hovingham, curate	
Gauntlett, Henry (1762-1834)	Tilshead and Imber, Wiltshire, curate	1786
Gisborne, Thomas (1758-1846)	Barton-under-Needwood, perpetual curate	1783
Glascott, Cradock (1743-1831)	Trevecca College Hatherleigh	
Glazebrook, James (1744-1803)	Smisby, Derbyshire (now Leichestershire)	1773

⁷⁶⁷ Assistant to Henry Crooke.

⁷⁶⁸ Appointed through the influence of Henry Venn.

⁷⁶⁹ See Charles Wesley's *Manuscript Journal*, 2:370 and *Works* 19:330.

	Rowley Regis, Stafforshires, curate Latchford, near Warrington, curate	1779
Goode, William, Sr. (1762-1816)	Abbots Ladgley, curate King's Langley St. Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe and St. Anne's, Blackfriars, London, curate ⁷⁷⁰ St. Anne's, lect. St. Lawrence, Jewry, lecturer St. Andrews and St. Anne's, rector	1784-1786 1785 1786-1795 1780- 1796 1793 1795-1816
Graham, John (1765-1844)		
Graces, Charles Casper (1717-1787)	Ocbrook, Derbyshire, vicar	
Grimshaw, William (1708-1763)	Todmordon Haworth, perpetual curate	1742-1763
Gurdon, Philip (1746-1817)	Magdalen College, Oxford, fellow Cookham, Berkshire, curate Family Estates in Suffolk, Asslington Hall	1770-1778 1771-1777 1777
Hall, Westley ⁷⁷¹ (1711-1776)	Wooten Rivers, Wiltshire	1735

⁷⁷⁰ Curate to Romaine.

⁷⁷¹ Westley was an Oxford Methodist and one of John Wesley's students at Lincoln College. He eventually converted to Moravianism.

Hallward, John ⁷⁷² (1749-1826)	St. Giles, Reading, curate Worcester College, Oxon, fellow Shawbury, Shropshire, vicar Milden,, Suffolk, rector Asington, Suffolk, vicar	1773-1775 1775 1775-1780 1779-1826 1779-1826
Hart, Richard (1727-1808)	Warminster, curate St. George's, Kingswood, Bristol, vicar ⁷⁷³	1756-1759 1759-1808
Hartley, Richard (1746-1836)	The Bournes, Kent, curate	1786
Hartley, Thomas (1709-1784)	Chiswick, curate Winwick, Huntingdon	1737-1744 1744-1770
Haweis, Thomas (1734-1820)	St. Mary Magdalene, Oxford, curate ⁷⁷⁴ Lock Hospital, assistant chaplain. All Saints, Aldwinckle, Northamptonshire Trustee and Executor and Chaplain to Lady Huntingdon	1757-1758 1758-1764 1764-1820
Hawker, Robert	St. Martin, near Looe, Cornwall,	1778-1779

⁷⁷² Evangelical at Oxford in the 1760s with connections to the St. Edmund Hall six.

⁷⁷³ Hart was born into a well-connected Bristol mercantile and clerical family with Tory, and perhaps even Jacobite, affiliations. St. George's parish was "created to offer Anglican care to the coal-mining community which had attracted so much early evangelical preaching. He held this post to his death, reporting by 1766 that Methodism was declining in the parish," (*DEB*, 527).

⁷⁷⁴ Curate to Joseph Lane when he was run out of Oxford.

(1753-1827)	curate Charles, near Plymouth, curate Charles, near Plymouth, rector	1779-1784 1784-1827
Hervey, James ⁷⁷⁵ (1714-1758)	Dummer, Hampshire, curate Stoke Abbey, Devon, chaplain Bideford, curate Weston Favell, curate Collingtree, curate ⁷⁷⁶ Weston Favell, rector Collingtree, rector	1736-1737 1737-1739 1740-1743 1743-1752 1752-1758
Hervey, Thomas (1741-1806)	Chapel of Rampside, curate Underbarrow near Kendal, perpetual curate	c. 1770-
Hey, Samuel (1745-1828)	Steeple Aston, vicar	1787-1828
Hill, Charles ⁷⁷⁷ (c.1727-1801)	Fremington, Devon, curate Tawstock, rector (Tawslock?)	1752-1756 1756-1792
Hill, Rowland ⁷⁷⁸	Roving Preacher	1769-1773

⁷⁷⁵ Oxford Methodist.

⁷⁷⁶ Collingtree had been Hervey's father's church.

⁷⁷⁷ Converted under the preaching of George Thomson of St. Genny's, Cornwall at his father's church in Devon.

⁷⁷⁸ Hill still faced opposition to his desire for holy orders. Alan Munden notes that, "though he was diligent in his parish duties, he would not be confined by the parochial system and continued to itinerate. The Bishop of Carlisle had agreed to ordain him priest (on letters dimissory from the Bishop of Bath and Wells) but the Archbishop of York intervened and for the rest of his ministry Hill remained in deacon's orders," (*DEB*, 553). Hill was known to found chapels in non-Evangelical parish, but closed them when Evangelicals were appointed to the parishes in which they resided.

(1744-1833)	Kingston, near Taunton, curate	1773-
Horne, Melville ⁷⁷⁹ (c.1761-1841)	Madeley, curate	1786
Housman, Robert (1759-1838)	Gargrave, Yorkshire, curate St. John's Chapel, Lancaster, curate Langton, Leicestershire, curate ⁷⁸⁰ St. Mary's, Leicestershire, curate Markfield, curate St. Martin's, Leicester, lecturer Foston, curate	1781-1785 1785 1786-1787 1787-1788 1788-1792 1792
Hutchings, John ⁷⁸¹ (c.1716-unknown)	Dummer, Hampshire, curate ⁷⁸²	1738
Jane, Joseph (1716-1795)	Cowley, curate St. Thomas, Oxford, vicar. St. Mary Magdalene, Oxford Iron Acton, Gloucestershire, rector	1737 (?) 1748-1763 1763-1788
Jesse, William ⁷⁸³ (c.1739-1815)	Itinerated for Lady Huntingon Hutton Cranswick, near Driffeld in Yorkshire, vicar West Bromwich	1766-1781 1767-1780 1790

⁷⁷⁹ Worked with Wesley just as had Fletcher, but had a later falling out with Jabez Bunting.

⁷⁸⁰ Curate to Thomas Robinson.

⁷⁸¹ Oxford Methodist, but eventually converted to Moravianism.

⁷⁸² Curate to Charles Kinchin.

⁷⁸³ Was of aristocratic stock and influenced by Thomas Haweis and Lady Huntingdon.

Johnson, Samuel	Cirencester, perpetual curate	1753-1778
Jones, John ⁷⁸⁴ (1721-1785)	Wesley's assistant Dovercourt and Harwick with Ramsey, curate, later vicar	1746-1748 post 1767
Jones, Thomas (1729-1762)	Collegiate Church of St. Saviour, Southwark Chaplain to Bishop of London, Thomas Sherlock ⁷⁸⁵	
Jones, Thomas ⁷⁸⁶	Dunton, Bucks, Advent, curate Clifton Reynes, curate	1771-1772 1772-
Jones, William (1755-1821)	Broxbourne and Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, curate	1781-1801
Jowett, Henry (1756-1830)		
Kinchin, Charles ⁷⁸⁷	Rector of Dummer in Hampshire.	1735-1742

⁷⁸⁴ "He had been refused episcopal ordination several times in his early years, because, presumably, of his Methodism," (*DEB*, 621).

⁷⁸⁵ For a long time, Jones was the only beneficed Evangelical in the capital.

⁷⁸⁶ Jones was one of six students expelled from St. Edmund Hall in 1768. He eventually served at Clifton Reynes, a mile from Olney. He had been tutored before going to Oxford by John Newton. Eventually, he was ordained deacon in 1771 and priest in 1772 by John Green of Lincoln, who had ordained Newton in 1765.

⁷⁸⁷ He was assisted by a succession of Evangelical curates including George Whitefield and James Hervey. Was

(1711-1742)		
“Mr. King” ⁷⁸⁸	Hull (Bristol) Middleton	
Kirkham, Robert ⁷⁸⁹ (1708-1767)	Stanway, Gloucestershire, curate to Uncle Stanton and Snowhill, rector, fam. liv.	1731 1739-1766
Knight, Samuel (1759-1827)	Witherington, curate ⁷⁹⁰	1783-1798
Madan, Martin (1726-1790)	All Hallows, Lombard St., London Lock Hospital, London	1750- c. 1755- 1780
Mayor, John (1755-1826)	Shawbury ⁷⁹¹	1781-
Mead, Henry ⁷⁹² (1745-1806)	Ram’s Chapel, Hackney St. John’s Wapping, lecturer St. Pancras, lecturer	1777-

a constant companion of Charles Wesley and the emerged as the leader of the Oxford Methodists after the brothers had left.

⁷⁸⁸ See Bryan Bury Collins. *An address to the higher ranks of people in the parish of St. Mary, Hull*. Hull, [1778].

⁷⁸⁹ Oxford Methodist, Brother of Varanese, i.e. Sarah (Sally) Kirkham.

⁷⁹⁰ First year of curacy under Thomas Adam.

⁷⁹¹ Was successor at Shawbury to James Stillingfleet and presented by Sir. Richard Hill. The parish was geographically close to Fletcher and de Courcy.

⁷⁹² Early student at Lady Huntingdon’s college, Trevecca.

Meriton, John ⁷⁹³ (1698-1753)		
Michell, Thomas (d. 1773)	Most likely of St Mewan, Cornwall Vicar of Veryan	1743
Middleton, Erasmus ⁷⁹⁴ (1739-1805)	Blackfriars, London, curate ⁷⁹⁵ Chelsea, curate ⁷⁹⁶ St Benet's, Gracechurch St, lecturer St Helen's, Bishopsgate St. Margaret's, Westminster, assistant Chaplain to Dowager Countess of Crawford and Lindsey	1783-
Milner, Isaac (1750-1820)	President of Queen's College, Cambridge Dean of Carlisle	
Milner, John ⁷⁹⁷ (1710-1777)	Vicar of Chipping	1739-

⁷⁹³ See Charles Wesley's *Manuscript Journal* for Sunday, July 3, 1743, 2:356, and also his *Funeral Hymns* (1759), 28-29.

⁷⁹⁴ One of six students ejected from St. Edmund Hall in 1768. Middleton was the author of *Biographica Evangelica*, 1769-1786, a history of Evangelicalism.

⁷⁹⁵ Curate to Romaine after 1768.

⁷⁹⁶ Curate to Cadogan.

⁷⁹⁷ "In 1748 he was appointed as one of the King's preachers with opportunity to spread the gospel throughout the country," (*DEB*, 775-6). Friend of both Grimshaw and Wesley. He may have been present at the 1753 Conference at Leeds.

Milner, Joseph ⁷⁹⁸ (1744-1797)	Hull Grammar School Holy Trinity, lect. North Ferriby, curate Vicar of North Ferriby	1767 1768-1786 same 1786-1797
Newell, Jeremiah (1756-1803)	Knightwick, Doddington, and St. John's Worcester, curate Missendon and Lea ⁷⁹⁹	1771- 1787 1787-
Newton, John (1725-1807)	Olney, Lincoln, curate City Living of St. Mary Woolnoth at St. Mary Woolchurch, Lombard Street	1764-1780
Nicholson, Isaac (1761-1807)	Cheshire Coddington, curate	c. 1784 1785
Ogden, Joseph (1760-1839)	Sowerby Bridge, Halifax, curate ⁸⁰⁰ St. John's, Bacup	1785-1788 1788-1794
Patrick [also Patrick], George (1746-1800)	St. Michael, Myland, Colchester, curate Aveley, Essex, rector Wennington, curate Chaplain to Lord Dacre of Aveley Chaplain at Morden College, Blackheath	1770 1772-1787 1773-1787 1780 1787-1790

⁷⁹⁸ Critical of Wesleyan Methodist theology.

⁷⁹⁹ Under the patronage of Lord Stillingfleet.

⁸⁰⁰ Dismissed from curacy as "Methodistical."

Peckwell, Henry (1746-1787)	Bloxham-cum-Digby, Lincolnshire, rector	1782-
Penrose, John ⁸⁰¹ (1713-1776)	St. Gluvias, Penryn vicar with Budock, Cornwall	1741-1776
Pentycross, Thomas ⁸⁰² (1747-1808)	Horley, Surrey, curate St. Mary's, Walingford, Berkshire, rector	1771-1774 1774-1808
Perronet, Vincent ⁸⁰³ (1693-1785)	Shoreham, Vicar	
Piercy, William ⁸⁰⁴ (1744-1819)	West Bromwich, curate Lock Hospital, chaplain ⁸⁰⁵	
Piers [also Pierce], Henry ⁸⁰⁶ (1694-1770)	Bexley, Vicar	1737-1770
Powley, Mathew	Wivenhoe, Northants, curate	

⁸⁰¹ One of the seven original members of Samuel Walker's clerical club. According to Hindmarsh he "remained suspicious of Methodism, advocating instead a vigorous but regular parochial ministry," (*DEB* 873). He was a friend of Walker, Thomas Adam, and Haweis.

⁸⁰² Connected to Lady Huntingdon and for a time a Baptist.

⁸⁰³ Longtime friend of the Wesleys.

⁸⁰⁴ Connected to Lady Huntingdon.

⁸⁰⁵ Chaplain with Madan, perhaps in the 1770s.

⁸⁰⁶ Friend of Methodism and member of the first conference in 1744.

(1740-1806)	Slaithwaite, Cornwall, curate ⁸⁰⁷ Dewsbury, vicar ⁸⁰⁸	1767-1777 1777-1806
Pugh, John ⁸⁰⁹ (1744-1799)	Raunceby and Cranwell, Lincolnshire, vicar	1771(?)- 1799
Ramsey, James (1733-1789)	St. Kitts Teston, Kent	1762 (?) 1781-1789
Rawlings, William (1761-1836)	Padstow, Cornwall ⁸¹⁰	1790-
Richardson, John ⁸¹¹ (1733-1792)	Cheddleston, Staffordshire, curate Leek, Stafforshire, curate ⁸¹² Battle, Sussex Ewhurst Methodist	1756(?) 1759 1762
Richardson, William ⁸¹³ (1745-1821)	Kirby Morrside, near Pickering, curate Vicar-choral at York Minster Incumbent of St. Michael-le-Belfrey	1768-1771 1771-1821 1771-1821

⁸⁰⁷ Succeeded Samuel Furley.

⁸⁰⁸ Gained Dewsbury through the influence of Lord Dartmouth.

⁸⁰⁹ Influenced by George Whitefield at Oxford.

⁸¹⁰ Followed Thomas Buddulph.

⁸¹¹ Preached John Wesley's funeral sermon.

⁸¹² Dismissed from his curacy for evangelical leanings.

⁸¹³ No university education, but was a founding member of the Elland Society.

	and St. Sampon	
Roberson, Hammond (1757-1841)	Dewsbury, curate ⁸¹⁴	1779-1778
Robinson, Thomas (1749-1813)	Wicham and Wichford, Isle of Ely, curate St. Martin and All Saints, Leicester, curate St. Mary's, Leicester, vicar	1771-1774 1774-1778 1778-
Rogers, Thomas	Norton-cum-Galby, Leicester, curate Ravenstone, Derbyshire, curate St. Mary's, Leicester, curate	Most likely 1778-
Romaine, William (1714-1795)	Lewtrenchard, Devon, curate Banstead, Surrey, curate Chaplainlain to Lord Mayor of London St. Dunston's-in-the-West, lecturer St. George's, Hanover Square, London, assisted in morning St. Olave's, Southwark, assistant in preaching and curate St. Bartholomew the Great in Smithfield, assistant minister of preaching and curate St. Anne's Blackfriars, annexed to St. Andrews-by-the-Wardrobe	1736-1738 1738-1741 1741- 1749- 1750-1756 1756- 1759-1761 1766-1795
Rose, William (1750-1829)	Carshalton and Beckenham, Surrey and Kent, rector	1776-1829

⁸¹⁴ Curate to Matthew Powley.

Rouquet, James (1730-1776)	Kingswood, Bristol, Glouchestershire West Harptree, vicar West Werburgh's, Bristol, curate ⁸¹⁵	1765-1769 1769-
Salmon, Matthew ⁸¹⁶ (1713-1797)		
Scott, Thomas (1747-1821)	Stoke Goldington and Gayhurst, Buckinghamshire, curate Weston Underwood, curate Ravenstone, curate (?) Olney, curate Lock Hospital, London, joint chaplaincy	1773-1775 1775-1786 1781- 1785
Sellon, Walter ⁸¹⁷ (1715-1792)	Donative of Smisby, Derbyshire Breedon on the Hill, Leicestershire Ledsham, Yorkshire	1754- 1770
Shirley, Walter (Sr.) (1725-1786)		

⁸¹⁵ Under Richard Symes.

⁸¹⁶ Was an Oxford Methodist. Never held a clerical post, and was later critical of Methodism.

⁸¹⁷ Walter Sellon was one of Wesley's first preachers and a master at Kingswood. He was now ordained and settled at Smithsby, near Ashby-de-la-Zouch. He became Vicar of Ashby, and was one of Wesley's chief supporters in the controversy with Toplady. See *Journal*, v. 293n, 361.

Simeon, Charles (1759-1836)	St. Edwards, Cambridge, curate Holy Trinity, Cambridge	1782-83 1783-1836
Simpson, David (1745-1799)	Ramsden Bellhouse, Essex, curate Buckingham, curate ⁸¹⁸ St. Michael, Macclesfield, curate ⁸¹⁹ Christ Church, Macclesfield, first incumbent	1769-71 1771-72 1772-79 1779-99
Simpson [also Sympson], John ⁸²⁰ (1709/10 - ?)		
Smith, William (1706-1765)	Combe, Oxfordshire, curate in charge	1737-65
Spencer, Edward (1739-1819)	Bradford-on-Avon, curate ⁸²¹ South Stoke, vicar Wingfield	1768-69 1769-71 1775-
Stillington, James (1729-1817)	Fellow Merton Wolvercote, curate Coychurch, Glamorgan, rector Prebendary of Worcester St. Martin's, Worcester Knighttwick at Doddenham,	1752-67 1765-67 1767-72 1772-1817 1775-1779 1775-1817

⁸¹⁸ Suspended by the Bishop of Chester for "methodistical bias."

⁸¹⁹ Allowed John Wesley to preach in his church.

⁸²⁰ Held a living in Leicestershire after graduating from University, but not mentioned after the 1740s.

⁸²¹ Curate to Walter Chapman. Wood writes that Spencer's "attachment to the Established Church was such that he declined to become one of Lady Huntingdon's chaplains." *DEB*, 1039. Spencer left St. Edmund Hall in 1768 without a degree.

	Worcestershire	
Stillingfleet, James (1741-1826)	Bierley Hall, near Bradford, chaplain ⁸²² Hotham, East Yorkshire, rector	1766 1771-1826
Stonehouse, George (1714-1793)	Vicar of St. Mary's, Islington	1738-1740
Stonehouse, James (Sir) (1716-1795)	Little Cheverell, Wiltshire, rector Great Cheverell, Wiltshire, curate ⁸²³	1764- 1779-
Storry, Robert (1751-1814)	Hovingham, Yorkshire, curate ⁸²⁴ Winteringham, curate ⁸²⁵ St. Peter's, Colchester ⁸²⁶	1781-1814
Symes, Richard ⁸²⁷ (c. 1722-c. 1794)	St. Werburgh's, Bristol, rector	1754-1794
Talbot, William ⁸²⁸	Kinton, Warwickshire, vicar	1740-1768

⁸²² Chaplain to Richard Richardson. Cousin to James Stillingfleet of previous entry.

⁸²³ Curate to Thomas Stedman.

⁸²⁴ Prepared for holy orders by Milner.

⁸²⁵ Curate to Thomas Adam.

⁸²⁶ Presented to St. Peter's by William Wilberforce's aunt.

⁸²⁷ "Both John Wesley and the Samuel Walker identified him as one of Bristol's evangelical clergy, but distrusted his mystical tendencies," (*DEB*, 1074).

(1717-1774)	St. Giles, Reading, vicar	1768-1774
Tandy, William (1750-1832)	High Ham, Somerset, curate Portishead, curate ⁸²⁹ St. Mary-le-Port, curate	After 1773/4 1784-99
Taylor, Samuel ⁸³⁰ (1710-1772)	Quinton, vicar	1738-1772
Thomson, George (1698-1782)	St. Genny's, Cornwall	1732-1782
Toplady, Augustus Montague (1740-1778)	Blagdon, Somerset, curate Taleigh, Hungerford, near Bath Harpford, vicar Fen Ottery, Devonshire Broadhembury, Devonshire, rector	1756 1762-64 1766-68 1766-68 1768-1778
Townsend, Joseph (1739-1816)	Pewsey, Wiltshire	1764-1816
Townshend, Edward (1760-1822)	Henley-on-Thames, rector Stewkley, Buckinghamshire, vicar Bray, vicar	1784-1822 1785-88 1787-1820
Trelawny, Henry (Sir)	Prebandery of Exeter	1789-1810

⁸²⁸ Itinerated for Lady Huntingdon.

⁸²⁹ Curate to James Brown.

⁸³⁰ The Wesleys preached regularly at Quinton. Taylor met much opposition for his Methodist tendencies.

(1756-1834)		
Venn, Henry ⁸³¹ (1724-1797)	Clapham Parish Church, curate Huddersfield, Yorkshire, vicar Yelling, Cambridgeshire, rector	1754-59 1759-1771 1771-
Vivian, Thomas (1722-1793)	Truro, curate Redruth Cornwood, vicar	1747-93
Vowler, James ⁸³² (c. 1727-1758)	St. Agnes, Cornwall, curate	1754-58
Walker, Samuel (1714-1761)	Doddiscombsleigh, Devonshire, curate Lanlivery, Cornwall, curate Truro, curate Talland, vicar	1737-38 1740-46 1746-1761 1747-52
Waltham, John (1750-1814)	Roche and Darlaston, Cornwall	c. 1784-
Whitelamb, John ⁸³³ (1709-1769)	Wroot	1734-69
Wilkinson, Watts (1755-1840)	Little Horwood, Buckinghamshire, curate	1779

⁸³¹ Founded Yorkshire Clerical Club, later Elland Society.

⁸³² "He was concerned that Wesleyan societies should not be formed in evangelical parishes," (*DEB*, 1147).

⁸³³ Oxford Methodist.

	St. Mary Aldermary with St. Thomas the Apostle in Bow Laver Lane, lecturer Aske's (Haberdasher's) Hospital, chaplain	1779- 1780-
Williams, Daniel (1749-1807)	Romsey, Hampshire, curate and later rector	1774-1807
Williams, John (1762-1802)	Burton and Williamstown, Dybed, curate	
Woodd, Basil (1760-1831)	St. Peter's, Cornhill, London, lecturer Bentinck Chapel, Marylebone	1784 1785-1831

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