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PREFACE

A book on Methodist doctrine should be a short book. This one is.

Such a concise work as this can only give an outline of historic Methodist teachings. Professor Scott J. Jones has offered a much more substantial commentary on United Methodist doctrinal statements that complements this work for those who seek a richer understanding of our doctrinal heritage. (See the bibliography.) In this book I have tried to give descriptions of historic Christian and Methodist teachings, leaving the illustration of these teachings to those who may instruct others based on this material.

Some earlier books on Methodist teachings are not well documented. I do want to offer descriptions of historic Methodist doctrinal teachings grounded in our doctrinal sources. Even though this is a short book, documentation is important for it because it tries to show that the material under discussion has demonstrable connections to Methodist doctrinal standards. I have used the marginal spaces both to indicate the flow of the book and to indicate references to some doctrinal sources. Less accessible materials are noted with a superscript dagger (†) and are documented in finer print in the "References" section at the end of the chapter in which it appears. Readers may need to refer to the Glossary and Index, which also includes important abbreviations used in this book.

The Appendix contains the complete text of the three doctrinal statements held in common by the AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM Churches, namely, the Apostles' 9 Creed, the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion, and the General Rules.

I need to thank many persons and groups for their assistance with this project. The following individuals read drafts of the first edition and commented on them, and I acknowledge with gratitude their contributions: Scott J. Jones of the Kansas Episcopal Area of The United Methodist Church; George McClain, who was, at that time, Executive Director of the Methodist Federation for Social Action; and Brother Jeffrey Gros, Memphis Theological Seminary. The combined Faith and Fellowship Class and Faithlink Class of Rockville United Methodist Church helped in reading drafts in May and June of 1998. Their readings and suggestions proved to be extremely helpful in reshaping the book, and I am grateful for their assistance.

In this revised edition, I have included references to more recent research on Methodist doctrine. I have separated the earlier "Resources and References" paragraphs at the end of chapters into separate paragraphs—"References" and
then "Further Resources." I have added references to some of the works of John Wesley at the conclusion of each chapter for readers who would like to study some of those, and I have given page numbers for these works in a collection of Wesley texts (*A Wesley Reader*) available for free download at www.tuckapaw.com.

It is my prayer that Methodists will find this book helpful in learning the beliefs held in common with other Christians, as well as distinctly Methodist emphases. In this way, I hope that their confidence in the faith may be strengthened and that the goal of greater Christian and Methodist unity may be realized.
INTRODUCTION
The Intent of This Book

This book intends to give a concise and critically accurate description of the historic teachings of four related Methodist denominations, namely,

The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church,
The African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME Zion) Church,
The Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, and
The United Methodist Church (UMC).

Relationships among These Churches

These four denominations share a common heritage in the Methodist Episcopal (ME) Church, which was formally organized in Baltimore in 1784. They share a common episcopal polity, a historic form of church government in which bishops play a central role. They share, moreover, a common set of doctrinal standards, the Twenty-ive Articles of Religion inherited from the ME Church. Through the Commission on Pan-Methodist Unity and Cooperation, these four churches are currently engaged in a process of discernment as to the form that greater unity between them should take.

It is beyond the scope of this book to give a full account of the history of divisions and reunions that led to the formation of these four churches. It might be argued that in no case did the division of these churches come about because of doctrinal differences, but this would be to take a narrow understanding of "doctrine" (see below) alien to the Methodist understanding. As we shall see, Methodist doctrinal consensus has always included consensus on moral issues. In fact, the issue of human slavery and the related issue of racial attitudes have been the most consistent factors in the division of these churches. But in order that the reader can have a cursory understanding of how these churches are related, we can summarize the following twelve steps of division and reunion:

ME 1784
1. The **Methodist Episcopal** (ME) Church was organized in Baltimore in 1784, and was the one church in which all four denominations in this study have roots.

**AME late 1700s**

2. African and African American followers of Richard Allen in Philadelphia departed from the St. George's Methodist society there in the late 1700s because of disrespectful treatment by their fellow Methodists. They organized a separate society that was related to the ME Church but became a formally separate denomination in the 1810s, the **African Methodist Episcopal** (AME) Church.

**AME Zion late 1700s**

3. At about the same time (in the 1790s), persons of African descent in the John Street society in New York also formed a separate society. This, too, was formally organized in succeeding decades as a separate denomination, the **African Methodist Episcopal Zion** (AME Zion) Church.

**UB late 1700s**

4. The German Reformed pastor Philip William Otterbein in Baltimore began organizing societies in Pennsylvania and Maryland from the late 1700s. These societies were similar to the Methodist societies, although they were not formally linked to them. Otterbein's successors called themselves the **United Brethren** (UB) in Christ, and in the early decades of the 1800s became more and more organized as a denomination.

**EA early 1800s**

5. A number of German-speaking Methodist societies were organized in the early 1800s by Jacob Albright. Although they were related to the ME societies in the beginning, they eventually became separate and were called the **Evangelical Association** (EA).

**MP 1830**
6. Many members of the ME Church disliked the strong power of bishops in the denomination and insisted on lay representation in conferences. When their concerns were rejected, they formed the Methodist Protestant (MP) Church (1830).

MES 1845

7. Although John Wesley and the earliest ME Conferences had ruled out slaveholding among Methodists, this moral condition for membership was increasingly neglected in southern Annual Conferences. The General Conference of 1844 reluctantly adopted a Plan of Separation by which the southern conferences organized in 1845 a separate church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MES).

CME 1870

8. After the Civil War, the African American members of the MES Church formed their own denomination (1870), originally the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, which took the name of the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church in the 1950s.

ME+MP+MES = MC (1939)

9. After decades of separation, the ME, MP, and MES Churches reunited in 1939 to form the Methodist Church (MC).

UB+EA=EUB (1946)

10. The UB and EA Churches united in 1946 to form the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) Church.

MC+EUB = UMC (1968)

11. The Methodist Church and the EUB Church united in 1968 to form The United Methodist Church (UMC).
12. Leaders of the AME, AME Zion, CME, UM, and a few other North American Methodist groups began meeting in the 1980s and formed the Commission on Pan-Methodist Unity and Cooperation, not a denomination but a coalition of churches seeking to discern what forms of unity they should pursue.

This list does not include other Methodist churches throughout the world, such as British Methodist churches nor even American Methodist churches beyond the predecessors of the AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM Churches. The history of each constituent church in this list bears a richness and complexity that readers are encouraged to explore, but the focus of this book is on the doctrinal unity of the AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM Churches.

**Need for the Study of Methodist Doctrine**

The principal reason for the study of doctrine is so that Christians can be clear about the faith they profess together. But we may note three further reasons that the study of Methodist doctrine bears particular importance now. (1) The fact that these four denominations are currently considering greater unity makes the understanding of their commonly held doctrines particularly important at this time. (2) Each of these denominations requires clergy to study the doctrines of their church, but to date, these courses have not had adequate resources for the study of doctrine as corporate consensus about centrally held teachings (see the definition below). (3) The fact that doctrine and the use of confessional statements has become a contested issue (at least in the UMC) in recent years also lends importance to the study of Methodist doctrine. The unfortunate degree of polarization within our churches calls for a careful and spiritually discerning examination of our commonly held beliefs.

**Definition of"Doctrine"**

This book takes *Methodist doctrine* to denote *that which Methodists have agreed to teach*. We focus in this study on consensus, or agreement, in teaching rather than the teachings of individual theologians. Methodist teaching has always included consensus about moral issues as well as formally "theological" issues (issues about God, salvation, the church, and so on), but we do need to distinguish doctrine as communal, or corporate, agreement from *theology* as such, which may denote any critical reflection on religious teachings. Our scope in this book will not consider the contemporary restatement or critique of
historic doctrine, but will be limited to an attempt to describe as accurately as possible the historic consensus of Methodists on Christian teachings.

**Reaching Doctrinal Consensus**

Churches have utilized a variety of means by which consensus is reached and expressed. In the ancient church, consensus was expressed primarily through the decisions of councils of bishops. At the time of the Reformation, consensus was reached and enforced in most Protestant churches through the agency of political leadership. Only since the seventeenth century have more participatory modes of consensus developed throughout Protestant communities. Among the Pan-Methodist denominations, *General Conferences* affirm and express doctrinal consensus. General Conferences are the only denominational bodies that can alter historic denominational doctrinal standards or add new ones that speak for the whole denomination. They also may express doctrine in less formal ways, for example, in developing new hymnals and worship resources, both of which express doctrinal consensus.

**A "Catholic Spirit"**

A consistent trait of the Wesleyan heritage and the Methodist churches has been a notable liberality, or openness, on doctrinal issues. John Wesley encouraged what he called a *catholic spirit*, a willingness to be open to and to work closely with those with whom he differed significantly on matters of worship and teachings that do not affect the essence of Christian belief. As we shall see, Methodists have historically made very few doctrinal requirements for church membership, although they have held church members accountable for their teachings. Methodism has never claimed to be the one true church and has seldom claimed to be even the "truest" of all churches, understanding itself rather as a religious movement with a particular mission among the broader body of Christian believers. Learning the Methodist tradition should entail learning the whole of the Christian tradition in a way in which liberality, or openness, in doctrine is encouraged as a central spiritual discipline.

**"Essential" Doctrines and "Opinions"**

In describing his vision of a "catholic spirit," John Wesley distinguished between *essential* doctrines on which agreement, or consensus, is critical, and *opinions* about theology or church practices on which disagreement should be
allowed. In his sermon on a "Catholic Spirit" he did not even specify what the "essential" doctrines were. But elsewhere in his writings we may discern two different sorts of essential doctrines: (a) doctrines that define the broad ecumenical, or "catholic," heritage of Christian faith (these include doctrines about the Trinity and the nature of Christ defined in the early Christian centuries, doctrines about the human need for grace defined at the time of the Reformation, and doctrines about the church and its sacraments and ministries) and (b) doctrines that define the particular spirituality and teachings of the Methodist movement (especially those teachings about the "Way of Salvation," including preparatory, justifying and sanctifying grace; see chapter 4).† That is to say, Wesley had a sense of that which was commonly Christian, and that which was distinctly Methodist. This sense of distinctly Methodist and broadly Christian doctrine persists in our Methodist doctrinal statements. We can see this by identifying three phases of Methodist doctrinal development.

**Doctrine for a Religious Movement**

The oldest Methodist doctrinal material, from the era of the Wesleys themselves, describes the distinct mission of the Methodist people. The Methodists of Wesley's era did not consider themselves to be a separate church, and they accepted the doctrines and the historic worship of the Church of England. The "General Rules" of the Methodist Societies (1743), Wesley's *Standard Sermons* and *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, the first *Collection* of Methodist hymns (1780), and the "Doctrinal Minutes" (used by the AME Church as its "Catechism on Faith") were all concerned with the working out of salvation, the role of the Methodist people as a means of God's grace, and the ethical implications of the quest for salvation.

**Doctrine for Methodist Denominations**

A second phase of Methodist doctrinal development came about when the Methodists became American denominations between 1784 and 1870. In this period various Methodist churches adopted doctrinal statements that express more of the fullness of Christian teaching. The Twenty-five Articles of Religion held in common by the AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM Churches, as well as the UB Confession of Faith (on which the current UM Confession of Faith is based) date from this period. Both represent the inheritance of ancient and Reformation faith, and they contain very little that is distinctly Methodist. In this period, Methodist churches also had to respond to challenges from other
denominations. One sign of this is the AME Church's statement on "apostolic succession," responding directly to claims that had been made by individual Episcopalians that Methodist and other churches' ordained ministries were invalid because they did not preserve an unbroken succession of bishops from the Apostles. (It is important to say that the Episcopal Church itself had not made such claims.) Methodist hymnals in this period also reflected the need to express the fullness of Christian teaching: in addition to teaching on the "way of salvation," for instance, they began to include more hymns in praise of the Trinity.

**Doctrine for an Ecumenical Christian Community**

A third phase of Methodist doctrinal development came in the last hundred years, when Methodist churches became increasingly involved in the Ecumenical Movement, a movement that has sought the visible unity of the divided churches beyond the invisible or spiritual unity that all Christians share and with critical social issues, concern for which was shared ecumenically. A sign of this was the growing use of historic Christian creeds on the part of Methodists. Although Methodist churches had used the Apostles' Creed from the 1800s, they also began to use the Nicene Creed from the middle of the 1900s. Methodist hymnals in the last century show a consistent trend to select hymns from a broad variety of Christian traditions. One significant doctrinal statement from this period, the UM statement of "Our Theological Task," expresses historic Methodist teachings in the context of the "apostolic faith" shared by all Christians. Questions asked for Methodist membership also reflected the growing sense of ecumenical commitment: both the UM and AME churches have begun to ask candidates for church membership questions based on the baptismal creeds of the ancient church. Methodist liturgies in the twentieth century also reflect a growing identification with the broader Christian community.

**Sources of Methodist Doctrine**

These three phases of doctrinal development have bequeathed doctrinal statements to our churches with differing modes of formal endorsement. The four Methodist denominations whose teachings are studied here include or refer to some doctrinal statements in their *Disciplines* as having constitutional status. In fact, we may note that the AME and AME Zion Churches continue the custom of the ME Church in naming their disciplinary books in a way that
underscores the centrality of doctrine: *The Doctrines and Discipline of the [African]
Methodist Episcopal [Zion] Church*. Among these four churches there are two doctrinal statements held in common: the Twenty-five Articles of Religion, and the General Rules. Beyond these, the AME Church and the UMC have additional doctrinal materials. The following, then, are the nine formal doctrinal statements of the AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM Churches that have been used in this book.

1. **The Twenty-five Articles of Religion**  
   (1784; AME, AME Zion, CME, UMC).

2. **The General Rules**  
   (1740s; AME, AME Zion, CME, UMC).

3. **Catechism on Faith** (based on the Wesleyan "Doctrinal Minutes"; AME).

4. **Statement on "Apostolic Succession" and "Religious Formalism"**  
   (1884; AME).

5. **Confession of Faith** (from United Brethren; 1816, and revised many times thereafter; UMC).

6. **John Wesley's Standard Sermons** (1700s; UMC; constitutional status in other churches is unclear).

7. **John Wesley's Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament** (1700s; UMC; constitutional status in other churches is unclear).

8. **The Methodist Social Creed** (originally 1908, with many revisions since; CME and UMC in differing versions).

9. **Statement of "Our Theological Task"** (1972, revised 1988; UMC).

**Other Sources of Methodist Doctrine**

All of these doctrinal statements have either constitutional force (they are protected by the constitutions of their denominations) or at least disciplinary
force (they are specified in a published *Discipline*) in Methodist denominations. We should also make the case that the hymns and historic creeds included in Methodist hymnals function in practice as *de facto* standards of commonly agreed-upon teaching or doctrine. Moreover, Methodist churches have approved some ecumenical documents that indicate a level of doctrinal consensus with the broader Christian community.

**Methodist Hymnals**

Methodist hymnals since the middle of the 1800s uniformly begin with the praise of the Trinity, recalling the worship underlying the ancient ecumenical creeds. They almost uniformly have a lengthy section on the "Christian life," laying out the more distinctly Wesleyan spiritual tradition that focuses on the "way of salvation" from recognition of sin and repentance, to justification and "assurance of pardon," to sanctification and the quest for "Christian perfection." Thus, the hymnal reinforces the faith taught in the Articles and Confessions, as well as the distinctly Wesleyan spirituality explicated in Wesley's *Standard Sermons* (above). We should not imply, however, that every hymn included in a Methodist hymnal carries an equal weight of consensus. Many hymns have been consistently included, and these carry a greater weight in expressing historic consensus. In addition to this, we would argue, the consistent structure of hymnals (for example, beginning with the praise of the triune God) also carries some weight in interpreting doctrine.

**Historic Creeds**

The Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of Wesley's Church of England formally sanctioned the use of the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian creeds. (The "Athanasian Creed" is a fifth-century creed used in Western churches, but was not subsequently affirmed by Methodists.) Wesley, however, omitted this article in revising the Articles of Religion for the American Methodists, and in fact he omitted the creed from the communion service in his revision of the Anglican Prayer Book, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America* (1784). His exclusions do not indicate any objection to the doctrines of the creeds but are significant nonetheless because they left Methodists without a formal affirmation of the historic creeds. The Articles of Religion and the UM Confession of Faith utilize the language of the Nicene creed (fourth century AD) and of the "Definition of Faith" of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451), so there could be little doubt that the Methodists agreed with the content of the historic
Methodist hymnals from the middle of the nineteenth century began to include the Apostles' Creed in worship, and it has become the customary creed recited in American Methodist churches, including the historically African American Methodist denominations (AME, AME Zion, and CME). Only in the twentieth century have American Methodists incorporated the Nicene Creed into their hymnals, and its use in worship remains relatively rare. Perhaps the most explicit affirmation of Nicene Faith on the part of Methodists came in the four Methodist denominations' formal acceptance of the *COCU Consensus*, which was the doctrinal basis for a proposed "Church of Christ Uniting."


**Ecumenical Commitments**

The mention of the *COCU Consensus* signals another extraconstitutional expression of Methodist doctrinal commitments, namely, doctrinal commitments expressed in ecumenical agreements. Methodists participated in the World Council of Churches study of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM) and here signaled for the first time that Methodists, along with other Christians, might be willing to reconsider some of their traditional concerns in the light of the ecumenical community. For example, BEM states that "baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament documents."† In both BEM and in the *COCU Consensus* Methodist churches have signaled their willingness to consider the office of bishop as a third "order" of ministry in addition to the orders of deacons and elders, as Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican traditions have done in the past. Methodist dialogues (some of them conducted by the World Methodist Council) with the Catholic Church and other churches may also have implications for the contemporary interpretation of doctrine.

**Doctrine and Church Membership**

Methodists have made few doctrinal requirements for church membership but have consistently reserved the possibility of removing church members for "dissemination of doctrine contrary to the established standards of doctrine"† of a Methodist denomination. Through the beginning of this century Methodist churches and churches of the United Brethren in Christ tradition practiced a form of preparation that they described as "probationary membership" in a local
congregation (this continues in AME, AME Zion, and CME Churches but is no longer practiced in the UM Church). An individual was received temporarily and then, after training and evidence of Christian conduct, was later received as a full member of a congregation, but the focus was overwhelmingly on morality and spirituality rather than profession of doctrine.

In fact, it has been only in this century that Methodists have made more explicit doctrinal requirements for church membership. The ritual for reception of adult members in the MC Hymnal of 1935 included the question, "Do you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ?" This doctrinally dubious question appeared at odds with the sixth Article of Religion, which asserts the unity of the Testaments, so the question was revised in the 1964 MC (then UM) Hymnal, "Do you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?" At the same time, the order for the baptism of adults added the question, "Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life?" These same questions appear in the 1984 AME and 1989 UM Hymnals, although the profession of faith in the Trinity is set as three separate questions and allows the use of the whole of the three articles of the Apostles' Creed (said with the whole congregation) as a response. In this case as in the use of the historic creeds, ecumenical dialogue and contact have influenced Methodist churches to be more explicit about their doctrinal commitments. But although church members make only a minimal profession of doctrine, they still remain liable to dismissal on grounds of teaching doctrines contrary to those of the denomination, although actual cases of dismissal on doctrinal grounds have been increasingly few in the last one hundred years.

Given that our churches seldom discipline members for doctrinal matters, we might consider the more practical dimensions of doctrine and church membership. Very few people join churches today based on doctrinal commitments, but once a person has joined a church (of whatever denomination) it becomes important to know the historic teachings of that church's tradition. Candidates for church membership should know historic Christian and Methodist teachings, and they should feel comfortable with Methodist worship (expressed in our hymnals) and with Methodist practices (for example, our system of appointed ministry).

**Doctrine and Ordained Ministry**
Candidates for ordination in Methodist churches are examined on a variety of topics, including historic Christian doctrine and specific Wesleyan teachings. Beyond these general examinations, all AME Zion and UM candidates for the order of elder and UM candidates for the order of (permanent) deacon are asked the following questions before the Annual Conference:

Have you studied the doctrines of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church [UM: "The United Methodist Church"]?

AME Zion and UM candidates for the order of elder are asked the following additional question:

Will you preach and maintain them?†

Although "the doctrines of our Church" are not specified, this most evidently refers to the content of the constitutionally protected doctrinal standards (listed above). The CME Church simply asks of candidates for elder, "Are you willing to conform to the Discipline of the Church?"† As in the case of lay members of congregations, ordained ministers can be removed on the grounds of teaching doctrine contrary to the church's doctrinal standards, and again, there have been increasingly few (but some) cases of removal on doctrinal grounds in this century.

Methodist Doctrine?

The reader still may wonder if there is such a thing as Methodist doctrine. It is a legitimate question. Are the agreements among Methodists trivial? Are the doctrinal standards to which we have reference in this book simply things written in books without connection to the life of Methodist Christians today? I would argue the following three points: (1) There is a substantial range of agreement found in our historic doctrinal statements, contemporary Methodist hymnals and liturgy, and our ecumenical commitments. (2) Nothing else beyond the formal doctrinal statements examined here speaks for Methodists as corporate groups. That is to say, Methodists may believe any number of things as individuals, but doctrinal statements adopted by communities can alone speak on behalf of those communities. (3) It is important in our current context of increasing secularization in contemporary culture that the Church needs to be clear about its central teachings. There may have been a time when churches could simply presuppose a wide range of agreement on basic Christian beliefs. If
it ever existed, that time is long past, and it is now time that Methodists and other Christians must be clear about what they believe and teach together. Beyond these three points, I would ask the reader to consider the particular teachings addressed in this book. For example, on the doctrine of the Trinity (see chapter 2), is there not a substantial agreement between the teachings of the Articles of Religion, the UM Confession of Faith, and the hymns (including the doxology) consistently sung in Methodist congregations? This book itself aims at demonstrating the level of consensus that exists in Methodist doctrine.

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**Doctrine and Spirituality**

"Doctrines are not God," C. S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*, "they are only a kind of map. But that map is based on the experience of hundreds of people who really were in touch with God."

† John Wesley himself stated that doctrinal orthodoxy by itself is "but a very slender part of religion."† We must look beyond doctrines to discern the divine mysteries to which they refer. For Methodist folk, learning doctrine has often come by singing hymns, by hearing sermons, by learning in membership classes, or by Bible study in Sunday school. In this process, we look beyond printed or spoken words to the realities to which they refer. In teaching about the Trinity, for instance, we look to the church's worship of God. In teaching about the sinful nature of humankind, we look to the ways in which God is healing the creation and ourselves. In considering doctrine, then, we are examining the church's collective wisdom through the generations as it relates to life in the divine presence today.

**The End of Methodist Doctrine**

The end, or goal, of Methodist teaching is not the advancement of Methodism. Our heritage has been used by God for a much greater end: the coming of God's reign, or kingdom. So we should pray fervently for the day when Methodism ceases to exist, for that great day when, our historic mission having been accomplished by divine grace, the Wesleyan heritage finally dissolves into the glory of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church." In the words of Charles Wesley, "names and sects and parties fall; thou, O Christ, art all in all!"

**References:** John Wesley's claims about "essential" doctrine that define the Christian community can be seen, for example, in his "Letter to a Roman Catholic" (1748), where he rehearsed the doctrines of the Nicene Creed. On the other hand the definitive doctrines of the Methodist movement were
summarized in such instances as his "Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained" (1746), VI:4-6, in which he referred to the three central teachings of repentance, faith, and holiness. On the dispute over the "Wesleyan Standards," see Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory*, 189–204; and Oden, *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition*. On the use of the historic creeds, cf. Harmon, "The Creeds in American Methodism," 1:563). The AME declaration on Apostolic Succession and Religious Formalism (1884) states that "we grant that the orderly repetition of the . . . Apostles' Creed . . . may conduce to the attainment" of spiritual worship (cited in the AME *Discipline* 1976, 31). "The COCU Consensus" is given in Burgess and Gros, *Growing Consensus*, 42. The quotation from *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* is from the 1982 printing, 4. Questions asked for church membership are given in the following MC and UM hymnals: Hymnal of 1935, 543; Hymnal of 1964, ritual section, n. 829 and 828; and the Hymnal of 1988, 35. Lay liability to removal on grounds of teaching doctrine contrary to that of the denomination is stated in the UM *Book of Discipline* 2008, ¶ 2702.3.d (755). The questions traditionally asked of candidates for ordained ministry in the UMC are given in the *Discipline* 2008, ¶ 336, questions 8-10; in the AME Zion *Discipline* 1994, 79; in the CME *Discipline* 1994, ¶ 420.3 (110). Ordained ministers' liability for teaching doctrine contrary to that of the church is discussed in the UM *Discipline* 2008, ¶ 2702, item "f." The quotation from C. S. Lewis is from *Mere Christianity*, 136. John Wesley's claim that orthodoxy is "but a very slender part of religion" comes in his "Plain Account of the People Called Methodists" (1748), I:2.

CHAPTER 1
DOCTRINES
ABOUT
RELIGIOUS
AUTHORITY

Religious Authority

Christians often need to be clear about the grounds, or basis, of their teachings, but significant differences over the basis, or authority, for Christian teachings have long divided the churches. Eastern Orthodox churches and the Catholic Church have historically taught that the basis of all religious teaching is the unbroken unity of scripture and later church traditions. The Protestant Reformation questioned the purity of later church traditions and insisted on the authority of the Bible above all traditions. Since the time of the Reformation, the use of reason and reflection on common human experience (in addition to or beyond the use of scripture and traditions) has deeply influenced Christian understandings of the grounds of religious teachings. Very often, differing understandings about the grounds of religious authority lie at the basis of other differences in Christian teaching.

Sufficiency and Primacy of Scripture

Article 5; UM Confession 4

UM "Theological Task"

The Twenty-five Articles of Religion shared by the AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM Churches affirm that the Bible "containeth all things necessary to salvation" (Article 5), that is, that the scriptures teach everything that human beings need to know for their salvation. The title of this Article uses the term "sufficiency of the scriptures" to describe this belief. Implied in the Articles and the UM Confession of Faith is the belief that the Bible is the primary source and authority for our faith, that is, no other authority can override the authority of God revealed in the scriptures. This teaching on the primacy of the scriptures is made explicit in the UM statement of "Our Theological Task." The Methodist teaching on the sufficiency and primacy of the Bible concords with the Protestant Reformation’s emphasis on the use of scripture to reform the church.
Methodists have not historically defined their understanding of the Bible's authority as involving "inerrancy" or "infallibility" of the Bible as Fundamentalist churches typically do, except that we have historically insisted that the Bible does not fail in teaching the way of salvation. Our emphasis on the sufficiency and primacy of the scriptures does not rule out the use of Christian tradition or reflection on broader human experience (see below), but it clarifies that all other claims to authority must be judged by the primary authority of the Bible.

**Unity of the Bible**

Article 6; cf. UM Confession 4

The Articles of Religion state that the Old Testament stands in continuity with the New Testament, since the one God offers salvation through Christ in both Testaments (Article 6). Underlying this teaching as well as the teaching of the sufficiency and primacy of scripture is a belief in the *unity* of the Bible, that is, the belief that the Bible tells a single story that focuses on the salvation offered through Christ. Susanna and John Wesley spoke of "the analogy of faith" that is the core message of the whole Bible, telling the story of salvation.

Our historic teaching about the unity of the Bible may appear to be contradicted by more recent biblical scholarship that emphasizes the diversity of voices and perspectives in biblical literature. Methodist scholars have generally embraced this biblical scholarship, but Methodist doctrine insists that underlying the diversity of voices in the Bible is a divinely given message, at the center of which is our Savior. The UM statement of "Our Theological Task" (1988) acknowledges explicitly "a variety of diverse traditions, some of which reflect tensions in interpretation within the early Judeo-Christian heritage." But it goes on to claim that "these traditions are woven together in the Bible in a manner that expresses the fundamental unity of God's revelation."

*UM "Theological Task"

**Tradition**

The God revealed in the Bible has continued to act, even after the age of the apostles. *Tradition* does not mean everything that happened in the past, but the *past that we value*, or treasure. In affirming and valuing the past, we affirm that God's presence did not retreat after the time of the New Testament. We affirm
that God has been active through the history of the Christian community. We value in the past those times when we can perceive most clearly God's presence. Methodist doctrine does share the Reformation's suspicion that much in the Christian past amounted to a corruption of God's plan: our fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth Articles of Religion condemn teachings and practices that the Reformation judged to be corrupt. Similarly, the AME statement on "Apostolic Succession and Religious Formalism" rejects as later corruptions the teaching that all bishops must stand in an unbroken succession from the apostles, and the "formalism" that often accompanies traditional worship.

Articles 14-16; cf. AME "Apostolic Succession and Religious Formalism"

But Methodists do rejoice in God's presence in the long history of the Christian tradition that went before us: in affirming ancient creeds such as the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, we unite our voices with the voices of our Christian forebears. Our worship bears the marks of ancient and medieval Christian liturgy. Methodist hymnals now include a variety of voices from the Christian past, including texts and tunes from Catholic and Eastern Orthodox traditions as well as from a variety of Protestant traditions. At a special called General Conference in 1970, the UMC adopted a resolution clarifying that the anti-Catholic statements in our Articles are not directed toward contemporary Catholicism or the whole of the Catholic inheritance of faith but rather against medieval corruptions of Christian tradition, some of which were misunderstood by the Reformers. The UM Statement of "Our Theological Task" affirms the critical use of Christian traditions as a source and criterion of Christian teaching.

Reason and Experience

UM "Theological Task"

The same UM statement of "Our Theological Task" affirms the use of reason and experience as sources and criteria of Christian teaching. Reason refers to the many ways in which human beings reflect on the world, both as individuals and as communities. John Wesley believed that reason guided by the grace available to all persons could discern the existence of God and the need for moral responsibility; it could even illuminate the meaning of the Bible. Wesley valued experience, especially, as human contact with God, and he believed that our experience of the divine also illumined our own spiritual quest and (combined with reason) could clarify the meaning of the Bible. Wesley also believed that
our experience of the material universe could teach us much, even about spiritual matters, but in every case he insisted that reason and experience could not stand by themselves but had to be guided by scripture. Reason and experience may be particularly helpful guides in relating biblical and traditional teachings to our own times, cultures, and situations.

**The "Wesleyan Quadrilateral"**

**UM "Theological Task"**

In affirming the use of tradition, experience, and reason along with scripture, the 1972 UM statement of "Our Theological Task" offered a lucid and insightful account of "Doctrinal Guidelines in The United Methodist Church." Although the statement did not attribute these four criteria as a system to John Wesley, they came very quickly to be called the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral." It has become clear since that time that although John Wesley did use scripture, experience, reason, and the Christian past (he disliked the term "tradition"), he did not himself advocate the use of these four criteria as a method for reflection. The 1988 revision of "Our Theological Task" had to clarify that scripture has primary authority over tradition, experience, and reason. But the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" has proven to be a helpful way to call Methodists (especially United Methodists) to be clear about the grounds of their teaching, and it has proven useful as a method for ethical and practical reflection on contemporary issues that are not directly addressed by the scriptures.

**God's Authority and the Christian Life**

Underlying scripture, tradition, experience, and reason is the belief that God should be the guide of our lives, as communities and as individuals. We need to ask, though, whether we really value God's authority. It is one thing to speculate on the meaning of biblical passages; it is quite another thing to ask, "Do we (do I) expect to be changed by the Bible?" If we do not expect to be changed by God's revelation—in scripture, in Christian tradition, or in reflection on our experience—then in fact we do not really own the authority of scripture or of God known in other ways. To own the authority of God is to expect that God will challenge us, comfort us, lead us, and empower us as we discern God's message today.

**References:** The quotation from the UM statement of "Our Theological Task" on the unity of the Bible is from the section on "Scripture" *(UM Book of*

**Further Resources:** For general comparative material on doctrines about religious authority, see Campbell, Christian Confessions, 33–38 (Eastern Orthodoxy), 76–83 (Catholicism), 133–44 (Reformation and Union churches), and 205–17 (Evangelical and Free churches). For more detailed material on Wesleyan views of religious authority, see Campbell, Wesleyan Beliefs, 40–42, 96–98, 211–19; Jones, United Methodist Doctrine, 127–43. Lectures by Néstor O. Míguez and Tom Albin in lesson 2 of The Wesleyan Studies Project video series discuss teachings about religious authority in the context of the Wesleyan tradition.
CHAPTER 2
Teachings about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit

Historic Christianity is distinguished from other religious traditions by its worship of Jesus Christ as God. The World Council of Churches expresses this basic Christian identity when its "Basis" states that the WCC is "a fellowship of churches which confess Jesus Christ to be God and Savior."† In the first centuries of its life, the Christian community had to clarify this basic issue of identity, and the church's historic creeds, preeminently the Nicene Creed, reflect the church's consensus on this critical issue. The doctrine of the Trinity was the church's way of accounting for its distinctive worship of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Doctrine of the Trinity

Methodist congregations regularly sing "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." The doctrine of the Trinity arose out of the question of whether it was appropriate to worship Christ as God. The Arian teachers of the 300s AD claimed that Christ was divine in a sense but was a "creature" (a created being) not to be accorded the same worship as the uncreated Father. In response to the Arians, councils of Christian bishops in AD 325 and AD 381 gave us the creed that is historically called the Nicene Creed. This creed clarified that Christ is "of one substance with the Father, begotten, not created" and that the Holy Spirit is "together worshipped and glorified" with the Father and the Son. Although the councils did not use the word "Trinity," they defined the trinitarian teaching that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equally, eternally God, together the subject of the church's adoration. The first Methodist Article of Religion and the first article of the UM Confession of Faith assert the teaching of the Trinity utilizing the language of the ancient councils, and our churches have included the Nicene Creed in Methodist hymnals since the middle of the 1900s.

Nicene Creed
Article 1; UM Confession 1

The doctrine of the Trinity does not really attempt to say who God is, for the mystery of God surpasses our language and abilities of expression. The doctrine of the Trinity did set some practical limits on teaching about God. On the one hand, this doctrine maintains that we cannot so emphasize the oneness of God as to deny the personal relationships between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, this doctrine also maintains that we cannot so emphasize the relationships between the three divine Persons as to deny the belief that God is one.

In using language about God the "Father" and the "Son," it was not the intention of the early Councils to say that we must address God in exclusively masculine terms (that was not the issue). In fact, our first Article of Religion states that God is "without body or parts," and for this reason genderspecific language about God causes real problems. Some Methodists have experimented with alternative expressions for the worship of the three divine Persons, but our churches have not yet come to a consensus as to what language may faithfully express our adoration of the "three-one God" (John Wesley's favored expression).

Christ as Divine and Human

Athanasius, On the Incarnation of the Word

Council of Chalcedon (AD 451)

Article 2; UM Confession 2

The doctrine of the Trinity made it clear that Christ was "of one being" with the Father, that Christ was fully divine. It was also important in the early Christian communities to make it clear that Christ became a true human being and that, in Christ, the divine and human were perfectly united. In the words of an ancient African bishop, "Christ became human in order that humans might become divine." In the 400s AD, a council of bishops expressed the consensus that Christ unites together a fully divine "nature" and a fully human "nature." Our Methodist Articles of Religion and the UM Confession of Faith affirm this same teaching about the "two natures" (divine and human) united in the "one person" of Christ.
Methodist Alteration of the Apostles' Creed

Apostles' Creed 1 Peter 3:19

1989 *UM Hymnal*, no. 882

One historic expression of the teaching that Christ was truly human is the statement in the Apostles' Creed that Christ "descended into hell," or "descended to the dead." This meant that Christ experienced death as fully as humans do. First Peter even states that in death Christ "went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison," apparently a reference to the belief in the early church that Christ proclaimed the Good News to those who had died before the coming of the Savior. John Wesley omitted from the Methodist Articles of Religion an Anglican Article asserting Christ's descent into hell, although this probably did not indicate his disapproval. When Methodists began to include the Apostles' Creed in their hymnals in the 1800s, many did not understand the meaning of this expression. They thought that to say that Christ "descended into hell" meant that Christ went to the place of judgment ("hell," in the sense of the place of eternal punishment, see chapter 6), and so removed the expression from the Creed. Growing understanding of the meaning of this expression has led some Methodist churches to include the "ecumenical" version of the Apostles' Creed as well as the form in which Methodists have customarily said the creed.

The Holy Spirit

Nicene Creed

UM Confession 3; 1989 *UM Hymnal*, nos. 337-536

In defining their central teachings about Christ, early Christians had a great deal to say. They had considerably less to say about the Holy Spirit, although by AD 381 the Nicene Creed had been revised to make it clear that the Spirit is to be accorded equal reverence with the Father and the Son. Our fourth Article of Religion and the UM Confession of Faith affirm this teaching. These statements, however, also state that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father and the Son." The expression "and the Son" had been added to the Nicene Creed in the Western church in the middle ages, and the addition of these words to the Creed is one of the issues that has divided Eastern and Western Christians since then. Eastern Christians do not believe that the bishops of Rome who authorized this change have the authority to alter the Creed. Many Protestant groups, responding to
ecumenical concerns about the alteration of the Creed, have elected to omit these words, and Methodist churches will need to face this issue in the future.

Article 4; UM Confession 3

Methodist piety, expressed in the UM Confession of Faith, has referred consistently to the work of the Holy Spirit in pouring out divine grace to human beings and leading us through the "way of salvation." For this reason, the 1989 United Methodist Hymnal places its entire section on the Christian life under the heading of the Holy Spirit. This stress on the present activity of the Holy Spirit not only characterized historic Methodist piety but flowed from Methodism into the Holiness and Pentecostal movements.

UM Confession 3; 1989 UM Hymnal, nos. 337-536

But although Methodist piety speaks of the Spirit as the one who guides us through the way of the Christian life, we should be clear that salvation is the work of all of the Persons of the Trinity. The mystery of God is such that we cannot really divide out the works of God. So although we may speak of the First Person as the "Creator," we also recognize that "all things came into being through" Christ the Word (John 1:3), and in our ordination services we pray "Come, Creator Spirit." Similarly, in the work of salvation each of the three Persons of the Godhead works together on our behalf (cf. Romans 8:12-17). The Persons of the Godhead cannot be reduced to functions.

Historic Methodist Emphases in Teaching about God

Emphasis on the Personal Nature of God


What Methodist doctrine teaches about the worship of the Trinity, the nature of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is consonant with the faith of the historic Christian community. In mentioning above the way in which Methodists have spoken of the Holy Spirit as the one who guides us in the way of salvation, though, we have identified one historic and distinctive emphasis of Methodists in teaching
about God. Methodists have historically emphasized the intensely personal nature of God. This can be seen in Charles Wesley's hymns, for example, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." It can also be seen in the Gospel hymns favored by Methodists from the late 1800s, for instance, Frances Jane Crosby's "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

Although it should not be a matter of contradiction, this emphasis on the personal and relational nature of God sometimes complements the emphasis on God's objective power stressed in other Christian traditions.

**Emphasis on God's Love for Humankind**

Hymnals: AME (1984), no. 279; CME (1987), no. 169

Another historic Methodist emphasis has been on the love and compassion that God has for all humankind. With Charles Wesley we wonder, "Amazing love! How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?" And with Frances Jane Crosby we sing of God's compassion, "Hear the voice that entreats you, O return ye unto God! He is of great compassion and of wondrous love." Our emphasis on God's love does not contradict our belief in God's power, but Methodist devotion often stresses divine love.


**Worship and the Life of Faith**

Luther's *Larger Catechism*

When we gather to worship, we affirm as a community that which is ultimately, finally important. We meet on the first day of the week to affirm, with other Christians, that the God whom we know as the divine Trinity is the final reality. We have to live through the week in that affirmation. Luther commented on the First Commandment, "That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself is, I say, really your God."† We face the constant temptation to cling to other things rather than to God, to make other things, as Luther suggests, our gods. Our teaching about God grows out of our worship, where we name the true subject of our adoration: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit."

**References.** The "Basis" of the constitution of the World Council of Churches is given in Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church*, 333. Luther's
comment on the First Commandment is from the Larger Catechism, given in Tappert, The Book of Concord, 365.

CHAPTER 3
Teachings about the Human Condition and Salvation

Historic Christian teachings about human nature and salvation attempt to describe the sinful, or fallen, condition of humankind and God's intention for the healing of that condition. These issues lay at the forefront of the Protestant Reformation, and many of the Methodist teachings on human nature and salvation are the inheritance of the Reformation. But John Wesley also made a distinctive contribution to understandings of salvation, especially in his attempt to understand in a methodical way what he called the "way of salvation," that is, the way in which God's intention for salvation becomes real through the life of a woman or a man. This chapter will focus on the broader, more foundational issues about human nature and salvation inherited from the Reformation; the next chapter will examine the more distinctly Wesleyan teachings about the "way of salvation."

Universal Need for Grace

Historic Methodist doctrine affirms the Reformation's passionate insistence that every human being stands in need of God's grace: we cannot possibly save ourselves. The seventh Article of Religion states that every human being is subject to "original sin" (see below), and the eighth Article denies that human beings have any free will on their own, apart from the help, or assistance, of grace. These articles together make clear the belief that our salvation is the result of God's grace, not of our own work or effort.

Articles 7-8; cf. UM Confession 7; AME Catechism qqu. 15, 51-53

Original Righteousness and Original Sin

Article 7; cf. Anglican Article 9

The presupposition of these teachings is that human beings were created in the image of God and were endowed at first with the perfect righteousness and
holiness that God intended for them. Thus, the seventh Article of Religion states that original sin marks a fall from original righteousness, which John Wesley sometimes called "original perfection." In using the traditional Western language about original sin, the Methodist Article (7) affirms only that original sin denotes "the corruption of the nature of every" person. That is to say, we live in a world "infected" by sin, and that infection touches each of us. But the Methodist Article (which Wesley edited in 1784) omits a significant phrase from the older Anglican Article stating that "in every person born into this world, [original sin] deserveth God's wrath and damnation."† Although Wesley's omissions do not always indicate disapproval, we know that he doubted whether God would condemn any person on the basis of original sin only.† As Wesley understood it, the corruption of our nature in original sin, unaided by grace, leads inevitably to "actual sin" on the part of all human beings, sin for which we are truly responsible and for which we are liable to God's judgment. But although he doubted whether original sin itself deserves condemnation from God, still he believed in the universal need for grace, because he believed that every human being falls into actual sin.

Methodist Temptation to Believe in Natural Human Ability

Although historic Methodist teaching insists on the universal need for grace, there has been a tendency in Methodist teaching to deny this by claiming that human beings have "free will" or the ability to obey God's commands on their own, or by preaching as if human beings by themselves have the power to resist evil and do good.† Methodists have always been optimists about what grace can accomplish and indeed have spoken of every person as having a kind of free will (see the following paragraphs). But historic Methodist teaching insisted on an optimism of divine grace (not of human effort) and insisted that humans have free will as a result of grace, not as a "natural" ability.

Universal Availability of Grace

Now—only after stating the universal need for grace—can we say what Methodists love to say about human nature and salvation, namely, that God's grace is universally available, that is, available to every human being. Wesley and Methodists after him rejected the doctrine of "limited atonement," the belief that only certain human beings have been elect or chosen by God for salvation and others will be damned. The teaching about limited atonement was usually associated with the belief in "predestination" as God's predetermination of who
would be saved and who would not. John Wesley insisted that Christ is "the true light, which enlightens [every]" person (John 1:9), and so Charles Wesley invited all human beings to the Gospel feast: "Ye need not one be left behind, for God hath bidden all mankind" [UM: "God hath bid all humankind"]. Wesleyans reject all forms of the doctrine of predestination that imply that God does not will the salvation of every human being.


The "Arminian" Tradition

This teaching set Wesley at odds with Luther, Calvin, and Augustine—in fact, with a large strain of the Western theological tradition, the "Augustinian" tradition that emphasized God's choice, election, or predestination of who would be saved. It placed Wesley and the Methodists in a rather different strain of Christian tradition alongside the broad Eastern Christian traditions, the Jesuits (among Catholics), and such Protestants as Jacob Arminius, all of whom insisted on the universal availability of grace. Because of the connection with the Dutch teacher Arminius, our teaching on universal availability of grace is sometimes described as Arminian.

Free Will

Article 8; UM Confession 7

One implication of the Methodist's "Arminian" belief is the related belief that all human beings have free will to follow or reject Christ as a result of grace. Note that we say "as a result of grace": our eighth Article of Religion explicitly denies that human beings have natural free will ("natural" in this case means "by ourselves" or "apart from grace"). What this means is that we expect God to be at work in every human being, whether Christians, followers of other religious traditions, atheists, whomever. Methodists trust that the "free will" humans exercise, and whatever good humans may actually do, are signs that God's grace is working in them. It means, moreover, that God's initiative in salvation allows for, empowers, and requires a free human response to God's "Amazing Grace."

Grace and the Christian Pilgrimage

The recognition of the universal need for grace and the universal availability of grace provides a basic framework for our lives as Christians. In the next chapter we shall explore the distinctly Wesleyan form that the Christian pilgrimage may take. Here, however, we pause to note that the Christian's pilgrimage, from start to finish, is undergirded by divine grace. Our hope for healing and salvation is grounded not in our strength but in God's. Even our hope for the sanctification of the world—for a world in which God's peace, God's justice, and God's love prevail—even this hope "is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness" (Edward Mote).

**References:** The text of the ninth Anglican Article (answering to the seventh Methodist Article) is given in Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, 269–70. Wesley's doubt about whether persons would be condemned on the basis of original sin only was expressed in a letter to John Mason, 21 November 1776 (in Telford, *Letters of the Reverend John Wesley*, 6:239–40). The tendency in Methodist theology to insist on natural human ability and free will is documented by Chiles in *Theological Transition in American Methodism*. See especially chapter 5, "From Free Grace to Free Will," 144–83).

CHAPTER 4
DISTINCTIVELY WESLEYAN DOCTRINES ABOUT THE "WAY OF SALVATION"

Teachings about the "Way of Salvation"

Building on the foundational teachings about the universal human need for grace and the universal availability of grace, John Wesley and the early Methodists became fascinated with the process by which women and men actually live out the life of grace. John Wesley sometimes referred to this process as the "way of salvation," as in the title of one of his sermons, "The Scripture Way of Salvation." Wesley considered himself to be a scientific observer of the religious life, constantly inquiring about persons' religious experience, making notes, and reaching conclusions based on his and others' experience. Teachings about the "way of salvation" express more of the distinctive spirituality of the Wesleyan movement. For that reason, this chapter will rely more on the Wesleyan sources (including John Wesley's Sermons) than will other chapters in this book.

The pattern of Methodist teaching about the "way of salvation" has persisted consistently in Methodist hymnals. The first Methodist hymnal, John and Charles Wesley's Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists (1780) was organized, as John Wesley noted, to show the experience of believers. Subsequent Methodist hymnals typically have a long section, often entitled "The Christian Life," in which hymns are arranged according to the "way of salvation," from repentance to faith and justification to sanctification (see below). This chapter, then, examines the distinctive Wesleyan spiritual inheritance in speaking about the "way of salvation."

Organizing the "Way of Salvation"

John Wesley sometimes organized his understanding of the "way of salvation" under the three headings of "preventing grace" (God's grace coming before we believe in Christ), "justifying grace" (God's grace enabling us to believe in Christ), and "sanctifying grace" (God's grace leading us to holiness).† The United Methodist Hymnal of 1989 utilizes a similar scheme of "prevenient," justifying, and sanctifying grace. The text following utilizes this scheme,
although Wesley himself could develop much more elaborate descriptions of the "way of salvation" and many Methodist hymnals have more elaborate organizational schemes to describe the process of the Christian life.

Prevenient Grace

Article 8

The eighth Article of Religion and the writings of John Wesley refer to God's "preventing" grace. In John Wesley's time and before, the term "preventing" meant simply "coming before" (Latin, *preveniens*). Because the meaning of the term has changed considerably, we tend to speak today of God's "prevenient" grace, as in the headings of the 1989 *United Methodist Hymnal*. In either case the meaning is the same: "preventing" or "prevenient" grace means God's grace "coming before" our believing in Christ. We might speak more intelligibly by calling it "preparatory" or "assisting" grace, the latter being the term employed in the AME *Discipline* in the Articles of Religion. Consistent with the Arminian belief in the universal availability of grace, Methodists have consistently maintained that prevenient grace is God's grace given to every human being (see chapter 3). Thus, whenever any human being does good (Christian or not), we rejoice in the presence of divine grace.

Repentance and "Awakening"

Prevenient grace is the appropriate heading under which Methodists have described all the ways in which God works with human beings before they believe in Christ (again, "prevenient" refers to grace coming before faith in Christ). Prevenient grace leads us to repentance, sorrow over sin, and the realization that we are unable to save ourselves. For many Methodists through the centuries, this came as a vivid religious experience they called "conviction" or *awakening*, the experience in which a person comes to the terrible realization of her dangerous condition before God. For some Methodists, awakening came with intense emotional signs: crying out in terror, "mourning" or "moaning," even loss of consciousness. In Methodist camp meetings, a "mourner's bench" in front of the altar represented the place of repentance before faith. For some Methodists, the experience of prevenient grace came less as a vivid experience and more as a growing sense of the need for God. But it may be important to realize that although these experiences could seem dreadful, they were understood as a sign of God's work in a person. Methodists did not feel that they should hasten a person's conversion—that was God's work.
Justifying Grace

Article 9; UM Confession 9; AME Catechism, qqu. 1-7, 70-72

Wesley, "Salvation by Faith" I:2 and 4

Prevenient grace leads to justifying grace, the grace of God by which, through faith in Christ, our sins are forgiven. With the Protestant Reformers, Wesley and the Methodists insisted that our justification is by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10). The forgiveness of sins does not rely on goodness or merit or good works on our part. But Wesley and the Methodists insisted that faith is not simply a matter of knowing doctrines: Wesley's sermon on "Salvation by Faith" makes the point that even the devils know that Jesus is the Christ. The faith by which we are justified involves not merely knowledge about Christ but also heartfelt trust in Christ.

Assurance of Pardon

AME Catechism, qqu. 8, 31-39; cf. J. Wesley's Journal for 24 May 1738

The normal experience of early Methodist people involved not only belief in Christ but also a supernatural sense that one's sins had been pardoned by Christ. John Wesley and the Methodists referred to this aspect of their religious experience as "assurance of pardon." For them, assurance of pardon often came as a sense of divine peace following the tumult of "awakening" and repentance (see above). John Wesley's own experience at Aldersgate (24 May 1738) involved a divinely given "assurance."

Immediately after he had this vivid religious experience, John Wesley insisted that without assurance of pardon, there is no true justifying faith. But his continuing investigations into the religious experiences of men and women led him to recognize that the experience of assurance does not always accompany justification. Even still, he maintained that assurance was the "common privilege" of believers. Some of Charles Wesley's boldest hymns describe the rapture of the soul that has been assured of its pardon:

Hymnal: UM (1989), no. 342

"antepast" = "foretaste"

O how shall I the goodness tell,
Father, which thou to me hast showed?
That I, a child of wrath and hell,
I should be called a child of God!
Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,
Blest with this antepast of heaven!

'Tis Love! 'tis Love! Thou diedst for me,
I hear thy whisper in my heart.
The morning breaks, the shadows flee,
pure, Universal Love thou art.

Hymnal: UM (1989), no. 386

We should perhaps think of the experience of assurance as related to the earlier experiences of awakening and repentance: in a culture that could become emotionally distraught at the thought of one's own sinfulness, assurance came as the corresponding sense of relief from the terror of sin and judgment. For persons formed in a different cultural context, the experience of justification may take different forms. For example, "assurance" might appear as a sense of "direction" in one's life following the typical directionlessness of contemporary life. In this regard it may be important also to realize that some particular views of how justification and assurance must occur are culturally conditioned. The use of a "sinner's prayer" or the "altar call" at the end of an evangelistic service (to take two common examples) developed in the early 1800s in North American revivals and need not be seen as normative for Christians of all times and places. Christians have experienced faith and assurance in a variety of ways.

The Path of Sanctification

"New Birth," or regeneration

UM Confession 9

The Christian believer not only dies to sin in justification but also is "born again" to a new life in Christ. This new birth, or regeneration, marks the beginning of the quest for Christian holiness, or sanctification. As we shall see in the next chapter, Wesley himself believed that new birth (as well as justification) occurs at baptism, at least in the case of infants. But for those capable of mature
faith, it occurred simultaneously with justification in the moment a person came to believe in Christ. Moreover, he believed that most people, even those baptized as infants, had "sinned away" the grace they had once known and so stood in need of renewal of the new birth.

UM Confession 11; AME Catechism, qqu. 9-14, 31-32

**Transformed Will and Affections**

New birth is the beginning of the new life in Christ, a life of growth in holiness. The term Methodists have historically favored to describe growth in holiness is *sanctification* (from sanctus, "holy"). But sanctification does not mean a joyless pursuit of good works or grudging restraint from things we'd really like to do but know we shouldn't. Rather, on the Wesleyan understanding, sanctification denotes in the first place the transformation of our wills and affections. We as human beings come to love and desire that which God loves, so that the pursuit of sanctification is the pursuit of ultimate joy, and we do what is right and avoid what is evil because that is what our transformed wills truly desire. In Charles Wesley's words,

Hymnal: UM (1989), no. 410; "want" = "lack" or "need"

I want a principle within of watchful, godly fear, a sensibility of sin, a pain to feel it near.

Methodists often call upon believers to *renew* their commitment to Christ or to *rededicate* themselves to Christ.

**Moral Law**

An important aspect of the pursuit of sanctification is the careful following of God's *moral law*. Wesley and the Methodist doctrinal statements acknowledge, in harmony with the Reformed tradition, that the "ceremonial law" of the Hebrew Bible had passed out of use for Christians. But they insisted that the moral law remained as a guide to Christians. The content of the moral law includes preeminently the Ten Commandments. Methodist observance of the Lord's Day (see chapter 7) was grounded in their sense that the observance of Sunday as a day of rest fulfilled the Commandment to sanctify the Sabbath.

Article 6; AME Catechism, qqu. 19-20
Identifying Spiritual Problems

J. Wesley, sermons on "Wandering Thoughts," "Heaviness through Manifold Temptations," "The Wilderness State"

John Wesley's observation of persons' spiritual lives led him to identify and categorize a range of spiritual problems or illnesses that the believer might face in the quest of sanctification: temptation, fear, false security, boasting of spiritual accomplishments, forms of religious depression. Many of his sermons address these issues under titles that are sometimes simply descriptive but frequently employ biblical images: "Wandering Thoughts," "Heaviness through Manifold Temptations," "The Wilderness State," and so on. The latter title (the image is that of Israel in the wilderness, grumbling against God) indicates what Wesley considered to be the ultimate spiritual problem: loss of faith in Christ, which would imply loss of one's justification. Sometimes Methodists have spoken informally of the loss of faith and justification as falling from grace (cf. Hebrews 6:4-6). In affirming the possibility of losing faith and justification, Methodists reject the doctrine of "eternal security" taught in some churches, the notion that once one has believed in Christ, one's final salvation is guaranteed.

Sanctification and Christian Community

Social Sanctification

In the Wesleyan pattern, the quest for sanctification is not a lonely quest. It is a quest undertaken in company, with the whole system of Methodist class meetings, societies, bands, and other groupings as means to assist the seeker and the believer. It is a quest undertaken with the aid of the "means of grace," such as devotional Bible study, prayer, and the Lord's Supper (see the next chapter), all graciously provided by God and by means of which seekers and believers alike may have constant access to divine grace.

Sanctification and the "Means of Grace"

In the Wesleyan pattern, moreover, sanctification is not limited to the holiness of individual persons. It is a process in which believers seek the sanctification of the world around them. John Wesley himself encouraged the Methodists to take part in a wide range of movements for the betterment of social conditions. For instance, in one of Wesley's last letters he passionately encouraged William Wilberforce's efforts to end human slavery in British
territories. After Wesley's time Methodists involved themselves in efforts to improve conditions for laborers, women, and children; to end gambling; to control consumption of alcohol; to combat racism; and to act "In Defense of Creation" (the title of a declaration on nuclear proliferation issued by UM bishops in the 1980s). Thus the Methodist "way of salvation" leads not only inward but also outward. It leads to a comprehensive moral vision (see chapter 7) in which the transformation of the whole world is sought. But Methodists seek even this transformation, the transformation of the broader world, not by our own effort or goodness but (as ever) by divine grace.

The Goal of Sanctification: Entire Sanctification or Christian Perfection

UM Confession 11; AME Catechism, qqu. 80-95

Methodist piety describes the goal of sanctification as entire sanctification or Christian perfection. If the notion of perfection is offensive, it is also biblical: Jesus taught us to "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). And to what perfection can human beings aspire? Methodists have always answered this by repeating the Great Commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37; cf. Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27). Along with this, Methodists insist that Christian perfection also means the fulfillment of the second Commandment: love of our neighbor. Thus, Christian perfection or entire sanctification denotes primarily the perfection of our love for God and for our neighbor.

Wesley, sermon on "Christian Perfection" I:1-9

Wesley, sermon on "The Scripture Way of Salvation" III:14-15

John Wesley and Methodist teachers clarified that there are many ways in which human beings cannot be perfect: in this life we are never free from infirmities, temptations, mistakes, or ignorance. But when asked to justify their claim that we should look forward to (in eighteenth-century parlance, "expect") Christian perfection in this life, they responded with two related claims. (1) It is the intention of God that we should love God completely (again, the Great Commandment). (2) It is within the power of God to bring about that which God intends. To deny the doctrine of Christian perfection, as they understood it,
meant to deny one or the other of these central Christian claims. Although John Wesley doubted many claims to having been entirely sanctified (especially when individuals boasted about it), he believed that there were saints through the ages and in his own time who had been sanctified entirely by divine grace. Thus he asked his assistants (and Methodist churches still ask candidates for ordination): "Do you expect to [that is, look forward to] be made perfect in love in this life?"

**The "Way of Salvation" as a Distinctively Methodist Way of Life**

From the first stirrings of grace in the human soul through the consummation of God's work in entire sanctification, the Wesleyan understanding of the "way of salvation" offers a comprehensive vision of the Christian life. It is this vision that our mothers and fathers in the faith have sung and preached and taught and lived out. One aspect of the beauty of this vision lies in its balance: the Wesleyan vision attempts to balance justification and sanctification, divine grace and human responsibility, faith and good works, personal and social holiness. Another aspect of its beauty lies in its depth: the Wesleyan vision is not a simple pattern; there is a depth of experience reflected in John Wesley's sermons and a depth of poetic beauty expressed in Charles Wesley's hymns. This depth is amplified in the historic experience of Methodist people who sought to live out a life of fidelity to the Savior. The understanding of the "way of salvation," then, is one of Methodism's spiritual treasures: a distinct vision of the Christian life that seeks comprehensive transformation by God's grace. In our time, we should not only be inspired by the pattern of the "way of salvation" as it appeared in the eighteenth century. We too should be asking how people experience divine grace today.

Teachings about Church, Ministry, and Sacraments

Church

Article 13; cf. UM Confession 5

The Methodist movement did not set out to be a church and only ended up becoming separate through a series of unfortunate circumstances. As Methodists became more conscious of their identity as members of Methodist churches or denominations, it became necessary to clarify their understandings of the church, its ministries, and its most significant acts, including its sacraments. In most cases, Methodists inherited these teachings from their roots in the Church of England and in the broader Christian tradition, although there are some distinctive Methodist notes or adjuncts to these doctrines.

The thirteenth Article of Religion defines the "church" (in this case, meaning the universal Christian church) as involving three necessary elements: faith ("a congregation of faithful" people), preaching ("in which the pure Word of God is preached"), and sacraments ("and the Sacraments duly administered"). This definition is common to the Protestant Reformation; in fact, it echoes very closely the wording of the Anglican Article and the Lutheran Augsburg Confession before it.

Need for Discipline and Accountability

Preface to the General Rules

But beyond these three necessary elements of the Church there is a fourth element that gives a distinctively Methodist nuance to the understanding of Church. It is characteristic of the distinctly Methodist doctrinal statements to insist on a particular form of discipline, or accountability, as a distinct element of Christian fellowship. In a sense this is held in common with the Reformed tradition (Presbyterians and Congregationalists), which had also insisted on church discipline in addition to faith, preaching, and sacraments. But whereas
the Reformed tradition practiced this discipline at the level of local congregations, where the pastor and elders controlled access to communion, Methodists practiced this discipline and accountability at the level of smaller groups of believers. In early Methodist societies, class leaders issued tickets to admit men and women to the Love Feast (see below). Disciplined accountability in small groups has been a distinctly Methodist nuance of the understanding of "church," and the original stress of the Methodist Discipline was on this distinct form of accountable discipleship (see chapter 7). With this stress on accountability within voluntary societies, the Methodist movement within the Church of England offered an alternative account of what Christian fellowship meant.

The UM Confession of Faith follows the Nicene Creed in describing the Church as "one, holy, catholic and apostolic." These four adjectives are historically called the "notes" of the Church, and they describe the ideal Church, the model that is only partially recognized as how the Church exists in the world, and the goal toward which the Christian community is destined by God. The Church will be one in Christ, and we work and pray for its unity here. The Church is holy insofar as it is called apart from the world, but its holiness is only partial in the present time. The Church is catholic because it is intended to be universal (for all people) and to embrace the fullness of Christian teaching, but its catholicity will not be fully realized until it truly is an inclusive and faithful community. The Church is apostolic insofar as it stands in continuity with the apostolic witness, but the Church always stands in need of reformation to call it back to its apostolic witness.

**Notes of the Church**

Nicene Creed; UM Confession 5

**One (Unity)**

**Holy (Holiness)**

**Catholic (Catholicity)**

**Apostolic (Apostolicity)**

**The Church's Ministry**


**Ordained Ministry**

Within the fellowship of the church there are many "varieties of gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:4) and many functions and offices. The United Methodist Discipline states explicitly that all baptized Christians are "ministers," in that they all have gifts for service and ministry in the church. Some within the body of believers are *ordained* for particular ministries. Since the early 100s AD Christians have typically recognized three orders of ministry: deacons, priests (or "presbyters" or "elders"), and bishops. Methodists inherited this threefold pattern of ordained ministry from the Church of England with two nuances: they preferred to call the second order "elders" rather than "priests," and they regarded bishops as a higher degree of elders rather than a third order of ministry.† This understanding of *episcopacy* (the office of bishop) has affected Methodist relationships with other churches. In more recent ecumenical discussions, such as the WCC Faith and Order study of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982) or the COCU Consensus, Methodists (AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM) have signaled their willingness to embrace the historic threefold ordering of ordained ministry for the sake of ecumenical unity (see below for more on the role of bishops).

**Deacons**

"Transitional" Deacons

"Permanent" Deacons

Historically, Methodist *deacons* were persons preparing for ordained ministry as elders, and the office of deacon was simply a probationary and transitional office. This is still the case in the AME, AME Zion, and CME Churches. The UM Church has reshaped the office of deacon in recent years to allow for *permanent* (not transitional) deacons, persons committed to ministries of justice, mercy, and service. The UM Church is at one with Catholics, Anglicans, and others who have moved in recent years to restore the integrity of the office of permanent deacon.

**Elders**

In common speech Methodist *elders* are more often referred to as "ordained ministers" or "preachers" (but see below on lay preachers). Elders are ordained to preach and celebrate the sacraments. The UM Church states that elders are
ordained to "word, sacrament and order," where "order" refers both to the pastor's role in accountable discipleship (see above) and to the role typically exercised by bishops (see below) in ordaining and overseeing the church's ministries. One historic characteristic of the Methodist office of elders is their itinerant ministry. This originally meant that the elders traveled about from place to place, preaching in a different location from day to day as they followed large circuits. In American episcopal Methodist churches the circuits have been reduced to the point that congregations expect the same pastor from week to week. Itinerancy still refers to the distinctly Methodist manner of appointing elders, where bishops in consultation with churches and "Presiding Elders" (AME, AME Zion, CME) or "District Superintendents" (UM) assign elders to their pastoral charges. The Methodist itinerancy gave Methodists as a whole an advantage in evangelization through the 1800s by allowing a particular flexibility in following the expanding American frontier.

**Itinerant Ministry**

**Presiding Elders or District Superintendents**

**Bishops**

The commanding generals of this Methodist rapid deployment force are the bishops. The term "episcopal" in the name of the AME, AME Zion, and CME Churches (and the older ME and MES Churches) indicates the prominence of bishops in the governance of these churches. As indicated above, Methodists historically viewed bishops as elders set apart for the particular and personal ministry of superintending the church (not as a separate order of ministry). Like the bishops of older Christian communions (Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican), Methodist bishops are elected for life and represent the church in performing ordinations. Methodists do not insist on an unbroken succession of bishops from the ancient church. The AME Church statement on "Apostolic Succession" makes it clear that Methodist ministerial orders do not rely on a literal succession of bishops from the apostles. It is important to say, though, that other churches have not formally "condemned" or called into question Methodist orders of ministry for our lack of the outward sign of "apostolic succession," as is sometimes claimed. We should note that at least one constituent member of the UM Church, the Methodist Protestant Church, had rejected the idea of episcopacy (the office of bishop) altogether, and the EUB Church had "term" bishops (bishops elected to serve a specified term, not set apart as a bishop for
life). Finally, it is appropriate to note that Methodist churches, through the 
*COCU Consensus*, have signaled their willingness to embrace more historic 
forms of episcopacy in which apostolic succession is maintained, even though 
this move would not indicate belief that apostolic succession is necessary to the 
existence of the church.

**No Necessity of "Apostolic Succession"; AME Statement on "Apostolic 
Succession"

**Other Ministerial Offices**

**Lay Preachers**

**Deaconesses**

Beyond the deacons, elders, and bishops who answer to the three orders of 
historic churches, Methodists have historically employed a number of different 
ministerial offices. From very early on, laypersons preached among the 
Methodists. John Wesley tried to clarify that they were "extraordinary" ministers 
who were not usurping the "ordinary" ministries of (Anglican) priests. Almost 
all Methodist churches have employed some form of lay preaching ministry, 
although the ability of lay preachers (or "local preachers") to celebrate the 
sacraments has varied from time to time. Most Methodist denominations (but not 
the UM Church) ordain "local elders" who are authorized to celebrate the 
sacraments. Lay or local preachers and local elders are trained by the church, 
and thousands of smaller Methodist churches have been kept alive through the 
efforts of lay preachers. In the nineteenth century, Methodist churches trained 
and consecrated women as deaconesses for particular service-oriented 
ministries. The AME Church continues to do so. Their ministries form one of the 
historic precedents for UM renewal of the office of permanent deacon in recent 
decades. Beyond these offices, Methodist churches have employed lay persons 
in numerous offices, such as those of stewards, class leaders, and persons who 
serve on the church's boards and committees. The UMC continues the tradition 
of the older Methodist Protestant Church in insisting on equal lay and clergy 
representation on all connectional conferences.

**Means of Grace**

J. Wesley, sermon on "The Means of Grace" II:1
"General Rules" Part III

An important part of Methodist teaching about the Church is our belief that grace is to be found through regular channels appointed by God. John Wesley defended what he called the *means of grace*, which he defined as "outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace." In his sermon on "The Means of Grace," written in contention with a particular group of London Moravians, Wesley named prayer, "searching the Scriptures," and the Lord's Supper. In the "General Rules" our churches affirm that we are to seek Christ by "attending upon all the ordinances of God," which are specified as follows: public worship, preaching, the Lord's Supper, private and family prayer, scripture study, and fasting. John Wesley acknowledged that the "means of grace" were not limited to those explicitly named in scripture: he recognized even in the experience of the Methodist people that some activities, such as the regular visiting of the societies by the preachers, were found in practical experience to be means of grace. In subsequent Methodist experience, camp meetings and revivals were found, similarly, to be means of divine grace. Thus the CME *Discipline* has a separate chapter on the "Means of Grace," which includes discussion of the Lord's Supper and the Love Feast (see below).

**Sacraments**

Article 16; UM Confession 6

Among the means of grace, Wesley and the "General Rules" always name the Lord's Supper. Baptism is not named among them, because the lists of means of grace or "ordinances of God" include the means to be used regularly or repeatedly by Christians. Like other Protestant churches, Methodist churches acknowledge baptism and the Lord's Supper as *sacraments*, which our sixteenth Article of Religion defines as "certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us." This article implies that sacraments (a) are ordained by Christ with a command that we should continue them, (b) have an outward and "visible" sign (water, or the elements of wine and bread), and (c) somehow convey divine grace to those who receive them with faith. Historically, the office of a Methodist elder was distinguished by the authority to celebrate the sacraments.

**Baptism**
With almost all Christian communities, Methodists practice *baptism* following Christ's command (Matthew 28:19) as the sacrament of Christian initiation, the means by which persons are brought into the fellowship of the church. Methodists have not found it easy to come to a consensus about the relationship between baptism and salvation. Consider the following range of views on this issue:

1. Some churches have insisted that baptism is only an outward sign of membership and so has no direct relationship to our salvation (the belief favored by churches that practice believers’ baptism and by many liberal Protestants).

2. Churches of the Reformed tradition insisted that baptism is connected or linked to our justification and regeneration (new birth), but not "automatically": the moment when water was applied might be different from the moment when a person was justified and born again.

3. Older Christian traditions, including those of Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran churches as well as Wesley's own Anglican church have insisted that baptism is itself the means of justification and regeneration, that is, that those who have been baptized have been justified and born again.

   Option 1: Baptism as Outward Sign of Christian Identification

   Option 2: Baptism as Linked to Justification and Regeneration

   Option 3: Baptism as the Means of Justification and Regeneration

John Wesley affirmed the third position with respect to the baptism of infants. However, he warned that mature persons cannot "rely on" baptism, since it is possible to deny the faith into which one was baptized. Moreover, our Article of Religion on baptism (17) deletes a significant passage from the Anglican Article (on which it is based), which states that

J. Wesley, sermon on "The New Birth" IV:1-2

Article 17

as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God.
UM Confession 6

UM Baptismal Study, "By Water and the Spirit" (1996)

Because this passage contains the strongest language about baptism as an "instrument," its omission inclines the Methodist understanding of baptism toward the second historic position given above. Similarly, the UM Confession of Faith describes baptism as a "symbol of repentance and inner cleansing from sin." In fact, a UMC document on baptism adopted in 1996 affirms a position very similar to that of the historic Reformed churches, namely, that the moment of application of the water in baptism cannot be identified precisely as the moment when a person is born again.

Infant Baptism

Article 17; UM Confession 6

Methodist churches agree in practicing infant baptism (this is affirmed explicitly in the seventeenth Article) and historically have expended considerable energy defending the practice of infant baptism in response to churches that practice believers' baptism only. The practice of infant baptism is grounded in the household baptisms recorded in the New Testament (Acts 16:15, 16:33), Jesus' invitation to the children (Mathew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:15-17), and in the consideration that infants as well as others need the fellowship of the church. We might note, though, that in affirming the WCC study of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (1982) and in rearranging hymnals to place the order for adult baptism first, Methodist churches reflect a growing ecumenical trend to see adult baptism as the normative expression of baptism in the church. This does not contradict the continued practice of infant baptism, but it suggests that infant baptism should be seen as a special or exceptional possibility open to children of mature believers.

Modes of Baptism: Sprinkling, Pouring, Immersion

Methodist churches allow the practice of baptism by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. The fact that very few Methodist church buildings have large baptisteries means that immersion is seldom a practical choice. Again, however, growing ecumenical consensus has led Methodists with other Christians to
consider more seriously the option of baptism by immersion, the church's most ancient mode of baptism, and many newer Methodist church buildings have incorporated baptisteries that allow for immersion.

**The Lord's Supper**

The second sacrament affirmed by Methodists along with the historic Christian community is the sacrament of the *Lord's Supper* (we sometimes call it "Holy Communion," and in ecumenical contexts, the "Eucharist"). In this act we celebrate our fellowship or communion with Christ and with one another, and we recognize the new grace that Christ offers us. As we considered baptism above in relationship to three historic viewpoints, so we may consider the Lord's Supper in relation to the following four historic understandings:

1. Some churches maintain that the Lord's Supper is merely a memorial, or reminder, of Christ's sacrifice and a sign of Christian fellowship. Many Evangelical churches, liberal Protestants, and a minority in the Reformed churches have maintained this "Zwinglian" understanding of the Supper.

2. Historic Reformed churches maintain that although Christ's body ascended to heaven, the Supper of the Lord, when received with true faith, conveys a unique spiritual power. Because the Latin term for this spiritual power is *virtus*, this perspective is sometimes described as "Virtualism."

3. Lutheran churches maintain that Christ's true, human body is present with the elements of bread and wine in the celebration of the Supper. This perspective is often described as belief in the "corporeal" (bodily) presence of Christ.

4. Historic Catholic teaching maintains not only that Christ's human body is present but that the essence of bread and wine are changed, with only the appearance (but not the reality) of bread and wine persisting. This perspective is historically described as belief in "transubstantiation."

   **Option 1:** Memorialism, or Zwinglianism

   **Option 2:** Virtualism

   **Option 3:** Corporeal Presence

   **Option 4:** Transubstantiation

Article 18
The eighteenth Article of Religion explicitly rules out the medieval formulation of the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the introduction to this Article as well as the Wesleys' own eucharistic devotion would seem to call the first option into question. Certainly Charles Wesley's hymns evoke faith in more than a merely symbolic presence of Christ: "O taste the goodness of our God, / and eat his flesh and drink his blood."

"Real Presence"

Sometimes Charles Wesley used the precise language of Virtualism: "Who explains the wondrous way, how through these [elements] the virtue came? / These the virtue did convey, yet still remain the same." The Article (18) can be read as allowing for either Virtualism or belief in corporeal presence. Our Anglican sisters and brothers often avoid the need for the distinction by referring to the "Real Presence" of Christ in the sacrament, since "Real Presence" can allow for either of these views, although this term has not been used in historic Methodist doctrinal sources. Without the need for a precise definition of this, we should nevertheless approach Holy Communion in such a way that we expect to meet Christ in the sacrament.

Open Communion

It has become the custom of Methodist churches to practice open communion, in other words, our communion is open to all Christians. This long-standing custom is not grounded in doctrinal sources, and in fact the early Methodist churches practiced a very strict communion, access to which was controlled by class tickets in the same manner as the Love Feast (see below). Sometimes Methodists appeal to John Wesley's claim that communion could be a "converting ordinance"† to justify the liberality of our invitation to partake of the Lord's Supper. While this might justify the communion of baptized unbelievers (Wesley thought there were plenty of them), it does not address the issue of communion across denominational lines, which is the main intent of our openness in the invitation to receive the elements. The issue of open communion is ecumenically sensitive, not only because Methodists react negatively to the practice of strict, or "close," communion in other churches but also because other
churches may regard Methodist liberality as promiscuity, especially when individuals extend the invitation to nonbaptized or non-Christian persons.

**Frequent Communion**

Hymnal: UM (1989), no. 616

John and Charles Wesley advocated frequent communion. They maintained that refusal to commune, when the opportunity was available, meant rejecting Jesus Christ. John Wesley stated in 1784 that he expected every Methodist elder to celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday.† The practice of preaching in large circuits, however, meant that elders were not present every Sunday to every Methodist society (or church), and so congregations early on became accustomed to infrequent communion. Efforts for Wesleyan renewal in recent decades, as well as ecumenical contact, have encouraged Methodists to recover the grace of frequent communion. Here the challenging words of Charles Wesley apply: "Do not begin to make excuse; ah! Do not you his grace refuse; / your worldly cares and pleasures leave, and take what Jesus hath to give."

**Other Means of Grace**

**Love Feast**

**Watchnight**

We have mentioned above that John Wesley considered sacraments to be a part of the broader category of "means of grace." Methodists have recognized other means as well. The Love Feast was a primitive Christian institution revived by Moravians in John Wesley's time and taken up by the early Methodist societies. The Love Feast was celebrated quarterly in Methodist societies, and admission to it was controlled by issuing class tickets indicating faithful participation in the class and keeping the General Rules. Another distinctly Methodist institution (but also with early Christian precedents) was the watchnight, when Methodists would spend whole nights in prayer together, following the institution of "vigils" in the early church. Later Methodists would find camp meetings and revivals to be means of divine grace.

**The Church, the Means of Grace, and the Christian Life**

Compared to the more liturgical churches, Methodists often appear to be
freewheeling, informal, and Evangelical in their styles of worship and church life. Compared to Evangelical churches, on the other hand, Methodists appear to be somewhat more formal, more liturgical, and more "churchly." One of the gifts of the Methodist movement is to offer a "churchly" or sacramental vision of Evangelical faith. Our teachings on the nature of the church, its ministries, and its means of grace including its sacraments, describe the "churchly" side of the Methodist spirituality. But these are related directly to the quest for grace described in the previous chapter: Wesley's own definition of "means of grace" states that what they convey is prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace (see chapter 4).

References: The belief that bishops were a higher degree of elders rather than a third order of ministry was claimed in the Latitudinarian sources Wesley read in the 1750s and to whom he referred in justifying his ordinations of 1784 (Edward Stillingfleet and Peter King). The same sources are cited by Bishops Asbury and Coke in their published notes to the earliest ME Discipline, 45–46. John Wesley's reference to the Lord's Supper as a "converting ordinance" comes in a summary of a sermon reported in his Journal (27 June 1740). John Wesley's exhortation to the elders to celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday is found in his prefatory letter to the Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America (¶ 4, p. ii).

Further Resources: For general comparative materials on doctrines about the church and sacraments, cf. Campbell, Christian Confessions, 54–61 (Eastern Orthodoxy), 97–112 (Roman Catholicism), 163–83 (Reformation and Union churches), and 240–56 (Evangelical and Free churches). For a more detailed discussion of Wesleyan views of church, ministry, and sacraments, see Campbell, Wesleyan Beliefs, 46–57, 101–6, 167–201, 233–42; Jones, United Methodist Doctrine, 241–74. Lectures by Bishop David Kekumba Yemba, Dr. Henry H. Knight, Dr. Lawrence Hull Stookey, and Dr. Ted A. Campbell in lessons 9-11 of The Wesleyan Studies Project video series discuss teachings about the church, ministry, and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper in the context of the Wesleyan tradition. John Wesley's understanding of the means of grace, including the Lord's Supper, is expressed in his sermon on "The Means of Grace" in Campbell, Wesley Reader, 101–29). His explanation of his ordinations and his provision for a separate Methodist church in North America are given in his letter "To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and Our Brethren in North America" (Wesley Reader, 193–96).
CHAPTER 6
Teachings about Judgment, Eternal Life, and the Reign of God

What we believe about the future affects our lives from day to day, because we live by our visions. This is as true of groups of people as it is for individuals: a marriage, for example, may withstand any number of problems so long as a common vision or goal is shared. In describing teachings about judgment, eternal life, and the reign of God, we are really describing our tradition's understanding of a common vision for God's future. This has to be a shorter chapter, though, because Christian doctrine has not focused on these issues, and they are dealt with only obliquely in Methodist doctrinal sources.

Judgment

Article 3; cf. UM Confession 12 Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed


The third Article of Religion affirms that Christ "ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day." This statement is consistent with the Apostles' Creed ("from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead") and the Nicene Creed ("He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead"). In the end, Christ will be our judge. Wesley's Sermons maintain that at the final judgment every one of our thoughts, words, and deeds will be known and judged. Our justification on "the last day" will again be by faith in Christ (see chapters 3 and 4), but our works will not escape God's examination. Charles Wesley's hymn "Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending" paints a graphic portrait of this judgment: "Every eye shall now behold him, robed in dreadful majesty."

Eternal Life in Christ

Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed; UM Confession 12
Historic Methodist doctrine affirms, with the broader Christian tradition, that those who have been saved by Christ will share the joy of eternal fellowship with Christ and the saints. The Apostles' Creed concludes by affirming our belief in "the life everlasting"; similarly, the Nicene Creed concludes with an affirmation of "the life of the world to come." *Heaven* simply means eternal joy in Christ, in John Wesley's terms, "eternal happiness." The judgment reserved for those who reject Christ (*hell*) is "endless condemnation" (UM Confession), to be divorced finally from this eternal joy in Christ and fellowship with the saints. The church and its members never dare to make this judgment. In the end, we believe that "the Judge of all the earth [will] do what is just" (Genesis 18:25), that is, we trust that the final judgment will be based on God's own justice.

**Articles 14**

The Methodist Articles of Religion, following the teachings of the Reformation, rejected the medieval Catholic idea of *purgatory* as a place where the souls of those who have died in Christ could be aided by the prayers of the living. John Wesley himself believed in an intermediate state between death and the final judgment, where those who rejected Christ would be aware of their coming doom (not yet pronounced), and believers would share in the "bosom of Abraham," or "paradise," even continuing to grow in holiness there. This belief, however, is not formally affirmed in Methodist doctrinal standards, which reject the idea of purgatory but beyond that maintain an appropriate silence on what lies between death and the last judgment.

**The Kingdom, or Reign, of God**

Nicene Creed

J. Wesley, sermon on "The New Creation"

The last thing the Nicene Creed says about Christ is that "his kingdom will have no end." This refers to the biblical theme of the coming reign, or kingdom, of God, a message consistently on the lips of Jesus as Matthew, Mark, and Luke depict him. The "kingdom of God" is more than a personal vision of God's future: it implies a future in which God's reign, or rule, affects the whole world. It is a vision of the transformation of the earth until God's justice, mercy, and love prevail throughout the whole. Recent studies have shown that as John Wesley grew older his belief in the scope of salvation grew. His belief that the
"new creation" would involve the redemption and healing of the whole universe, only hinted at earlier in his life, became much more explicit. Although this vision for the redemption of the whole of creation is not as explicit in Methodist doctrinal sources as it is in John Wesley's later writings, it can provide a powerful basis for a renewed Wesleyan social and ecological vision today.

**Living by the Christian Hope**

We are called to live in hope, a hope (again!) "built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness" (Edward Mote). God's grace will change us, will change our Christian community, and in the end will transform the entirety of creation. At last it will be said that


The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord
and of his Messiah,
and he will reign forever and ever.

(Revelation 11:15)

**References:** On the idea of the "new creation" in Wesley's later thought and its relevance for contemporary Wesleyan life, see Runyon, *New Creation.*

CHAPTER 7

METHODIST
DOCTRINE AND
METHODIST ETHOS

Doctrine, Morality, and Ethos

A book on Christian doctrine would not necessarily discuss matters of Christian ethics and morality, but the truth is that many of the Methodist doctrinal standards (especially the General Rules and the Social Creed) are concerned with Christian morality. As we have seen in the introduction, Methodist doctrine has consistently included moral as well as theological affirmations, and Methodist membership was based largely on ethical, not doctrinal, tests. Many of the ethical issues addressed in older Methodist doctrinal statements seem antiquated today (for example, regarding the payment of certain tariffs) or even quaint (observance of Sunday as the Lord's Day). But it is important to include even in this concise work at least a sketch of the Methodist ethos (way of life) expressed in our doctrinal statements. Because of our focus on the historic ethos of Methodist churches, this chapter will not address such critical contemporary ethical issues as abortion or homosexuality, although some Methodist churches have adopted contemporary statements regarding these issues.

Methodist Ethos: Strict Personal Morality and Progressive Social Morality

In describing what a truly Christian society might look like, C. S. Lewis speculated that we might find that "its economic life was very socialistic, and, in that sense 'advanced,' but that its family life and code of manners were rather old-fashioned." The same might be said of the historic Methodist ethos, but in very particular ways. With respect to personal morality it was a rather strict or stern view of life, stressing moral responsibility, the need to engage in good works, and the need to avoid such specific evils as smoking or drinking strong alcoholic beverages such as whiskey and gin. With respect to social morality,
however, the Methodist ethos tended to be rather more progressive, involving Methodist churches in the struggles to eradicate slavery and racism in the United States and to champion the needs of women and children in society.

**Ground of the Methodist Ethos: Transformed Affections**


We should be clear in entering a discussion of historic Methodist morality that the Methodist ethos did not understand moral life as a dull matter of sullenly avoiding really enticing evils and grudgingly doing what someone else regarded as good. As we have seen in chapter 4, Methodists understood that in the pursuit of sanctification one's will and affections were progressively transformed, so that by grace a person came to the point where she genuinely disliked evil and genuinely desired to do good. In practice, sermons and hymns often provided motivation by which a community was empowered to avoid named evils and to do all manner of good: "Rescue the perishing, care for the dying; / Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save" (Frances Jane Crosby). Gracious motivation (motivation that flows from divine grace) was as important for Methodist social morality as it was for personal morality. Avoiding evil and doing good were to flow from repentance, faith, and joy in Christ.

**Organization of This Chapter**

This chapter will attempt to describe the historic Methodist ethos expressed in our doctrinal statements under the three general headings of (1) life in the Christian community, (2) personal morality, and (3) social morality. The doctrinal sources most generally used are the General Rules, a few items in the Articles of Religion that relate to issues of morality, passages in John Wesley's *Sermons* that relate to issues of Christian conduct and morality, and the Methodist Social Creed. Beyond this, we shall indicate a few further areas of consistent moral consensus in Methodist communities, implied though not explicitly stated in historic doctrinal statements.

**Life in the Christian Community**

The three headings of the General Rules are (1) to avoid evil of all sorts, (2) to do good of all sorts, and (3) to attend upon all the "ordinances of God." Because the "ordinances of God" refer most directly to works done together with other Christians, one might argue that life in the Christian community comes last in
this ordering. However, life in the Christian community is the underlying presupposition of the General Rules, which functioned as a contract by which Methodists held each other accountable from week to week for their moral conduct. The General Rules hold Methodists specifically accountable for the following items related to life in the Christian community:

General Rules, Part III; cf. UM Confession, item 13

- The public worship of God
- The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded
- The Supper of the Lord
- Family and private prayer
- Searching the Scriptures
- Fasting or abstinence

**Public Worship, Preaching, and the Lord's Supper**

All of these items were understood as "means of grace" (see chapter 5). Methodists at first participated in the first three items—public worship, preaching, and the Lord's Supper—in the context of the Church of England. As Methodists developed their own circuits of itinerant preachers, the second item became increasingly their own, and by the 1780s Methodists had largely developed their own services of public worship, including the celebration of the Lord's Supper. As we have seen in chapter 5, however, celebration of communion among Methodists became rarer after the Wesleys' time. Eventually, Methodist public worship would develop more distinct services and occasions such as camp meetings, urban revivals, and Sunday-evening and Wednesday-evening prayer services.

**Prayer, Bible Study, Fasting**

The second group of three items in this list—family or personal prayer, devotional Bible study, and regular fasting—were disciplines specifically encouraged by the Methodists. It might be noted that fasting, for Methodists, did
not need to be harsh. John Wesley's own personal practice was to avoid food from sunrise until mid-afternoon on Wednesdays and Fridays, following the custom of ancient Christians. The combination of these forms of more intimate spirituality with public worship, preaching, and sacramental celebration gave Methodist life a characteristic shape formed by consistent spiritual disciplines.

**The Lord's Day**

General Rules, Part I; cf. UM Confession, item 14

A consistent aspect of the Methodist ethos was the observance of Sunday as "the Lord's Day," including abstention from labor on that day and serious attempts to avoid causing others to labor on Sunday. The General Rules specifically prohibit Methodists from "profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling."

**Class Meetings and Other Small Groups**

Preface to the General Rules

One further aspect of Methodist ethos within the Christian community was participation in small groups, the first being Methodist "societies," which by the mid-1740s had been subdivided into more intimate "classes." It is critically important to realize that these groups met not only for prayer and Bible study but especially for the exercise of accountable discipleship. The preface to the General Rules explains the origins of these groups and places the ethical material of the Rules in the context in which they were lived by Methodists. In becoming a Methodist, one agreed to be held accountable to the General Rules, and part of the weekly discipline of Methodist classes was to inquire as to whether each member had kept the Rules that week. The older structure of Methodist classes had begun to decline by the middle of the 1800s, although they persist in many of the African American Methodist churches. From the late 1800s, adult Sunday school classes and newer weekday groups for Methodist women, men, and youth took up some of the ethos of the older classes. The older ethos of accountable discipleship is currently undergoing renewal in Covenant Discipleship, which calls believers to organize small groups to hold one another accountable weekly to covenants developed from contemporary Christian concerns.

**Personal Morality**

A second broad area in which we may describe the historic Methodist ethos
has to do with teachings about personal morality. Methodists were expected to be above reproach in their personal conduct, and the period of probationary membership (still in effect for AME, AME Zion, and CME Churches) tests an individual's personal integrity. A candidate for Methodist membership was expected to be not only honest but also open. This is why many Methodists historically opposed membership in "secret societies" (meaning Masonic and similar organizations). Methodist membership implied openness and vulnerability to members of one's church, especially members of one's class meeting. Methodist conduct, above all, was to be guided by the Golden Rule.

**Morality with respect to Speech**

General Rules, Part I; J. Wesley, Sermon on "The Cure of Evil Speaking"

Article 25

Both the General Rules and at least one of the Articles of Religion are concerned with issues of appropriate speech. The General Rules forbid "the taking of the name of God in vain," "fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling," and "uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers." The twenty-fifth Article of Religion allows that Christians may swear an oath before a magistrate when legally required but maintains that "vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his apostle." Methodists, then, were to guard their speech carefully, speaking only when it was necessary or profitable.

**Sexual Purity**

Another area of personal morality important for the historic Methodist ethos has to do with sexual purity or chastity. The doctrinal statements actually say very little about sexual morality, taking it as a given that the only appropriate venue for the expression of sexual intimacy was within a marriage recognized by both the state and the church. In general, Methodists were to avoid any occasion of lewdness or of sexually suggestive or provocative situations. This meant, for instance, avoidance of dance, which Methodists considered to be sexually provocative.

**Dress**
General Rules, Part I

Yet another area of personal morality with which Methodists were concerned had to do with the manner in which one dressed. Thus, the General Rules forbid "what we know is not for the glory of God, as: The putting on of gold and costly apparel." Methodists emphasized simplicity of dress not only because dress might be sexually suggestive (see above) but also because they considered ornate dress to be an instance of improper stewardship, that is, an abuse of property. Thus, along with extravagance in dress the General Rules also forbid "softness and needless self-indulgence."

Stewardship of Money and Personal Possessions

J. Wesley, sermon on "The Use of Money," I:1, II:1, and III:1

Article 24; UM Confession, Article 15

The latter quotation raises the issue of the use of money and of personal possessions. Many Methodists are aware of John Wesley's sermon on "The Use of Money," in which he encouraged Methodists to "gain all you can," "save all you can," and "give all you can." This was not, however, a license for unbridled greed. Rather, the explanations under each of these points (especially the first one) clarify that one must gain all that one can by honest industry and in such a manner that no harm is done to any other person. Wesley was intensely aware of "The Danger of Increasing Riches" (the title of another of his Sermons) and thought that surplus accumulation amounted to robbing the poor. Thus the General Rules condemn "laying up treasure upon earth." Consistent with this same ethic, Methodists were wary of lending and borrowing. The General Rules condemn both "The giving or taking things on usury i.e., unlawful interest" and "borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them." The Articles of Religion and the United Methodist Confession of Faith both allow that Christians may own private property, but Methodists were concerned with the appropriate and responsible use, or stewardship, of one's possessions.

Alcohol: Temperance and Abstinence

General Rules, Part I

Methodists were passionately concerned with the issue of temperance in the
use of alcoholic beverages. At first, this meant quite literally temperance, that is, carefully controlled consumption. Thus, the General Rules forbid "drunkenness: buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity." In eighteenth-century use, "spirituous liquors" referred to distilled beverages (like whiskey or gin, not beer or wine). The expression "cases of extreme necessity" has reference to medicinal uses of distilled beverages. Eventually, however, Methodist experience with the dangers of alcohol led them to recommend (in some cases, to require) total abstinence from alcoholic beverages. Methodists involved themselves wholeheartedly in the struggle for prohibition of alcoholic beverages in the United States, believing that the proscription of alcohol would improve the whole of society.

**Worldly Amusements**

General Rules, Part I

**Opposition to Gambling**

Finally, an account of the personal morality associated with the historic Methodist ethos would be incomplete without some mention of Methodist opposition to popular, or "worldly," amusements. The General Rules forbid "the taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus" and "the singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God." Methodists have historically opposed gambling (in some cases all "games of chance") not only because of their desire to avoid worldly amusements but also on grounds of responsible stewardship and the disastrous effects gambling could have on one's life and on the character of one's community.

**Social Morality**

We now turn to consider a third area of historic Methodist ethos, namely, Methodist social morality. In this area, Methodists have historically taken rather progressive stands for the reform of society—in our view, the sanctification of society.

**Outreach**

A central concern of Methodist social morality has been the enterprise of social outreach. For the historic Methodist ethos, this did not mean simply
charitable giving (see below) but concrete, face-to-face involvement with the poor, the sick, the dying, the exploited, and the suffering. The General Rules held Methodists responsible for (among other things) "giving food to the hungry . . . clothing the naked . . . visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison." The mission statement of the AME Church captures the spirit of this stress on outreach eloquently, and at the very beginning of the *Discipline*:

**Mission Statement of the AME Church**

The Mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Church is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ's liberating gospel through word and deed. At every level of the Connection and in every local church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church shall engage in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society, out of which the A.M.E. Church evolved: that is, to seek out and save the lost, and serve the needy through a continuing program of (1) preaching the gospel, (2) feeding the hungry, (3) clothing the naked, (4) housing the homeless, (5) cheering the fallen, (6) providing jobs for the jobless, (7) administering to the need of those in prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, asylums and mental institutions, senior citizens' homes, caring for the sick, the shut-in, the mentally and socially disturbed, and (8) encouraging thrift and economic advancement.†

One of the enormous tragedies of Methodist history was the departure of the Salvation Army, under the leadership of Catherine and William Booth, from the Methodist New Connexion in nineteenth-century Britain. This was a tragedy because the more the Methodists identified with the middle class, the more they surrendered concrete involvement with the poor to such groups as the Salvation Army.

**Charitable Giving**

A second aspect of historic Methodist social ethos was charitable giving. This was linked directly to the personal ethic of responsible stewardship (above). Methodists condemned surplus accumulation of possession (accumulation of possessions beyond the necessities of life) in the belief that any surplus belonged to God and God's poor, and the hoarding of it amounted to robbing God and God's poor. Thus the third point of John Wesley's sermon was to "give all you can," and the text of the sermon makes it clear that believers are to give all they have beyond what is strictly needed. Again, the ethic of charitable giving must be seen in connection to the previous point about outreach: Methodists were not
simply funneling money to unknown organizations. Rather, they supported charitable missions with which they were themselves directly involved. In Methodist congregations, then, tithing and pledging are not simply ways to raise funds for church activities; they are an expression of spirituality.

**Involvement with Systemic Social Evils**

**Slavery**

A third aspect of the Methodist social ethos was *involvement with systemic social evils* that had to be addressed in the political forum. For the Methodists of Wesley's age, the preeminent instance of systemic evil was the institution of human *slavery*, and Wesley not only supported political efforts for the abolition of slavery, he insisted that slavery was a condition that should preclude an individual from being identified as a Methodist. The General Rules from 1808 forbade "slaveholding: buying or selling slaves" (see the notes on the General Rules in the Appendix).

Having said this, however, we must also say that failure to maintain the Wesleyan witness in regard to slavery became the single most divisive issue in the first hundred years of Methodist churches in America. Very early in its history the ME Church compromised on the condition of slaveholding as a bar to membership. The situation was exacerbated in the 1840s with the secession of the MES specifically over the issue of slaveholding. Even this should not blind us to the continuing witness of AME and AME Zion Methodists and many in the ME Church in favor of abolition. The ME General Conference finally restated in 1860 that slaveholding should be grounds for removal of a person from membership, and this historic stance was belatedly reaffirmed by the MES Church in the late 1800s.

**Opposition to Racism**

In addition to the issue of slavery, Methodist churches have had to face the broader issue of racism as a doctrinal matter. Although "racism" is sometimes identified simply with racial prejudice or bigotry, here we are concerned with the sinister combination of racial bigotry with inherited power structures or systems, especially in the churches. Although the doctrine of the catholicity of the church (see chapter 5) should rule out racism in all its forms, racism has been so insinuated into modern societies and cultures that churches must deal with it in more direct and sustained ways. For Methodists, concern about racism was at
first tied to the issue of slavery (see the preceding paragraphs). It appeared as a broader issue, however, at the very origins of the AME and AME Zion Churches, and then most sharply in the form of segregated Methodist denominations in the period after the Civil War in the United States.

AME Discipline 1992, p. 3.

The "Historical Statement" at the beginning of every AME Discipline and the "Founder's Address" at the beginning of every AME Zion Discipline make it clear that both of these denominations originated in situations of exclusion from church structures, painful exclusion that was based entirely on racial sentiment. From the very beginning, then, these churches were concerned not only with the issue of slavery but also with the broader issues of racism as prejudice insinuated into power structures. Thus the AME "Episcopal Salutation" states "that we unequivocally stand against racism in all of its manifestations, e.g., systemic, personal, institutional, ideological, cultural and economic."


By contrast, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, became a racially segregated church. When the CME Church separated in 1870 from the MES Church, its original name was the "Colored Methodist Episcopal Church," and it inherited the pattern of racial segregation of the southern states, although its Discipline notes that "it was at no time exclusively" African American. In 1954 the denomination formally changed its name to the "Christian Methodist Episcopal" Church, noting "the inconsistency of having a racial designation in the name of our church." The formal segregationist stance of the MES Church had to be dropped prior to its union with the ME and MP Churches in 1939, although structurally sanctioned racial segregation persisted until 1970 in the form of the separate Central Jurisdiction. Both the CME and the UM Churches now have articles asserting "The Inclusiveness of the Church" in their constitutions, and state their opposition to racism in their own versions of the Social Creed (CME) or Social Principles (UM). Members and agencies of all four Methodist churches participated in the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and the 1960s; recent historical scholarship has brought to light the significant involvement of white, southern Methodist churchwomen in this struggle.†

Stanza 3 by Laurence Hull Stookey (1987); in UM Hymnal (1989), no. 548; cf. AME
For Methodists, opposition to racism is grounded not only in our understanding that the church is "catholic" or universal (chapter 5) but also in our Arminian theology, which insists on the universal scope of the gospel and the universal scope of our evangelistic calling (chapter 3). Charles Wesley's hymns sounded a note of radical inclusion that echoes throughout Methodist worship. It continues to echo through favorite Methodist hymns, for example, this verse of "In Christ There Is No East or West," newly revised on the basis of Galatians 3:28:

In Christ is neither Jew nor Greek,  
and neither slave nor free;  
both male and female heirs are made,  
and all are kin to me.

The Methodist Social Creed

After the time of Wesley and the writing of our older doctrinal statements, Methodists involved themselves in other social reforming efforts. They involved themselves in efforts to ameliorate the conditions of women and children. Deaconesses (see chapter 5) stood at the forefront of Methodist social reform efforts. With the growth of American cities in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Methodists became involved in improving the conditions of laborers and urban poverty. Concern over these issues led the ME Church in 1908 to adopt a distinctive confessional document, the Methodist Social Creed. Though at first primarily addressing economic and labor issues, this declaration as it evolved stated boldly the Church's concern for responsible use of the earth's resources, for human rights, for just distribution of wealth, and for peace. Despite the progressive stance of this document, the MES and MP Churches adopted social creeds with very similar wording in the 1910s, and in some form this statement has been included in every Methodist Discipline since that time.

The CME Church adopted a Social Creed and has expanded it over the years into a chapter of their Discipline. At the time of its formation in 1946, the EUB Church also adopted a statement of social concern. Although differences in wording exist between various versions of the Social Creed, the Methodist
family has asserted a strong consensus in social concerns through it. The Social Creed stands as another indication that for Methodist churches, many moral issues have the status of the formal doctrines expressed in our more historic confessions.

* * *

We have stated at the beginning of this chapter that some aspects of the historic Methodist ethos may seem quaint today. One could make the case, though, that observance of the Lord's Day as a day of rest and quiet (just to take one instance) might make for a better world. Sometimes Methodists have divided within themselves over which issues to take most seriously. Evangelically oriented Methodists tend to stress personal morality, including abstinence from alcohol and tobacco and the need for sexual purity. Socially progressive Methodists have often stressed the need for social transformation and involvement in more systemic issues such as the abolition of slavery or the rights of children and women. In a world that often seems to lack moral bearings, though, it may be important to stress the wholeness and balance of the historic Methodist moral vision, a vision that insists that both the individual and society must be transformed by divine grace.

References: The quotation from C. S. Lewis is from Mere Christianity, 80. On the use and relevance of the General Rules, see Cartwright, "The General Rules Revisited " (Catalyst 24:4 [April 1998]: 1–2). The mission statement of the AME Church is quoted from the denomination's 1992 Doctrine and Discipline, 13.

Further Resources: For a fuller discussion of the historic Methodist social ethos, see Jones, United Methodist Doctrine, 221–40. A lecture by Dr. Rebekah Miles in lesson 8 of The Wesleyan Studies Project video series discusses teachings about Christian morality and ethics in the context of the Wesleyan tradition. The basic morality of the Wesleyan movement was laid out in the "General Rules" (in the Appendix of this book and in Campbell, Wesley Reader, 95–100). Wesley's opposition to slavery was expressed in his letter to William Wilberforce, written about six days before his own death in 1791 and the last letter he is known to have written (Wesley Reader, 197–98).
The Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord: who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried;† the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from hence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Note: The ecumenical use of this creed includes the words "He descended into hell" at this point. Nineteenth-century Methodists objected to the thought that Christ went to "hell" as the place of judgment, which was not the intended meaning of the creed. Dialogue with other churches has encouraged Methodists to restore the creed to its ecumenical form (cf. UM Hymnal [1989], no. 882; see chapter 2).

Twenty-five Articles of Religion (1784)

Note: The Twenty-five Articles of Religion are shared by the AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM Churches. There are some differences in the texts of the Articles received by these churches. Most of these are simply differences in punctuation or differences resulting from attempts to modernize the antiquated language of the Articles, and I have not noted such minor differences. In a few cases there are somewhat more significant omissions that have been noted. The following text is based on a comparison of the texts as given in the most recent Disciplines of these four denominations.

1. Of Faith in the Holy Trinity
There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

2. Of the Word, or Son of God, Who Was Made Very Man

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures—that is to say, the Godhead and manhood—were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

3. Of the Resurrection of Christ

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.

4. Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

5. Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the church. The names of the canonical books are:

Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Lamentations, Twelve Prophets the Less.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

6. Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet, notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

7. Of Original or Birth Sin

Original sin standeth not in the following [CME: "falling"] of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk [AME: "say"]), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

8. Of Free Will

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing [AME: "assisting"] us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

9. Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings.
Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

10. **Of Good Works**

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, can not put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgments; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ and spring out of a true and lively faith insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

11. **Of Works of Supererogation**

Voluntary works—besides, over, and above God's commandments—which are called [UM and AME: "they call"] works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required: whereas Christ saith plainly; When ye [UM: "you"] have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

12. **Of Sin after Justification**

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

13. **Of the Church**

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

14. **Of Purgatory**
The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshiping, and adoration, as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.

15. Of Speaking in the Congregation in Such a Tongue as the People Understand

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer in the church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood by the people.

16. Of the Sacraments

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him.

There are two sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

[Omitted in AME and UM]

The sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith, [1 Cor. xi. 29].

17. Of Baptism

[Omitted in AME]
Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference [whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized]; but it is also a sign of regeneration or [AME "of "] the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.

18. Of the Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

19. Of Both Kinds

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both the parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

20. Of the One Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross

The offering of Christ, once made, is that [AME Zion "a"] perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice [AME "sacraments"] of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

21. Of the Marriage of Ministers
The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best [AME "better"] to godliness.

22. Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which be belongs, which are not [AME Zion and CME omit "not"] repugnant to the Word of God, and are [AME Zion adds "not"] ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

23. Of the Rulers of the United States of America

[Omitted in CME]

[AME Zion adds a section relevant to persons not in the USA]

The President, the Congress, the general assemblies, the Governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the [constitution of the United States, and by the] constitutions of their respective States. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

24. Of Christian Men's Goods

The riches and goods of Christians are not common as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.
25. Of a Christian Man's Oath

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

The General Rules (1743)


In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley, in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them, and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

[Preface Omitted in CME Discipline]

This was the rise of the United Society, first in Europe, and then in America. Such a society is no other than "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."

That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in a class, one of whom is styled the leader. It is his duty:

1. To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order: (1) to inquire how their souls prosper; (2) to advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as occasion may require; (3) to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the preachers, church, and poor.
To meet the ministers and the stewards of the society once a week, in order: (1) to inform the minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be reproved; (2) to pay the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding.

There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies: "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins." But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits.

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind, especially that which is most generally practiced, such as:

The taking of the name of God in vain.
The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work therein or by buying or selling.
Drunkenness: buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity.

Slaveholding; buying or selling slaves.
Fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; the using many words in buying or selling.
The buying or selling goods that have not paid the duty.
The giving or taking things on usury i.e., unlawful interest.
Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers.
Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.
Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as:
The putting on of gold and costly apparel.
The taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus.
The singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God.
Softness and needless self-indulgence.
Laying up treasure upon earth.
Borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Secondly: By doing good; by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all men:

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison.

To their souls, by instructing, reproving, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine that "we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it."

By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another, helping each other in business, and so much the more because the world will love its own and them only.

By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race which is set before them, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world; and looking that men should say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the Lord's sake.

It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are:

The public worship of God.
The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded.

[AME puts last]
The Supper of the Lord.
Family and private prayer.
Searching the Scriptures.
Fasting or abstinence.

These are the General Rules of our societies; all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written Word, which is the only rule, and the
sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit
writes on truly awakened hearts. If there be any among us who observe them not,
who habitually break any of them, let it be known unto them who watch over
that soul as they who must give an account. We will admonish him of the error
of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he
hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.
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GLOSSARY AND INDEX

The following list serves as an index, glossary, and table of frequently used abbreviations. References are to page numbers in this book. Entries do not always contain glossary definitions; these are given only when I have judged that terms may not be broadly understood.

**Abolition of Slavery:** The ME General Rules from 1808 forbade Methodists from holding slaves and from participating in the slave trade; John Wesley and most subsequent Methodist groups officially supported abolition of slavery.
See pages 106–7, 111.

**Abstinence:** In Methodist circles, this term is especially used in reference to complete ("total abstinence") restraint from alcohol, which became the norm in Methodist churches around 1890.
See pages 103–4, 111.

**Alcohol:** Concern about the abuse of beverage alcohol has been central to Methodist moral teachings; Methodist churches have advocated temperance and in most cases since around 1890 total abstinence from alcoholic beverages.
See pages 67, 96, 103–4, 111.

**Allen, Richard (1760–1831):** Founder of the AME Church (q.v.).
See page 12.

**AME; African Methodist Episcopal Church:** denomination derived from the ME Church in Philadelphia (1780s or 1790s, organized as a denomination in 1810s) led originally by Richard Allen.

**AME Zion; African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church:** denomination derived from the ME Church in New York (1790s, organized as a denomination in 1810s).

**Amusements:** Historic Methodist ethos forbade such "worldly" amusements as theatre-going, dancing, playing games of chance, gambling, and the like.
See page 104.

**Anglican:** Refers to the Church of England (q.v.).

**Annual Conference:** The Methodist Conference of clergy and lay delegates that meets annually; also, a geographical subdivision of a Methodist denomination's General (AME, AME Zion, CME) or Jurisdictional (UMC)
Conference.
See pages 14, 17, 28, 39, 78, 107, 113–14.

Apostles' Creed: A creed based on ancient Western (Latin) baptismal creeds, the present form of the Apostles' Creed can be dated only from the middle ages (ca. 700s AD). It is the most widely used creed in Methodist churches; text given in the Appendix.
See pages 8, 21, 24–25, 27, 32, 38, 46, 90, 91.

Apostolic, Apostolicity: Faithfulness to and continuity with the church founded by the apostles; one of the four notes of the Church.
See pages 21, 31, 74.

Apostolic Succession: Belief rejected by Methodists that maintains that a sign of the true church is the maintenance of an unbroken succession of bishops in (or at least from) churches founded by the Apostles.
See pages 20, 22, 32, 38, 77.

Arianism: Belief rejected in historic Christian faith according to which Christ is a created and temporal (not eternal) being, subordinate to God the Father; the doctrine of the Trinity expressed in the Nicene Creed was formulated in response to Arianism in the 300s AD.
See page 44.

Arminian/Arminianism: Belief favored in Methodist teaching that God intends the salvation of all human beings and that Christ died for all human beings.

Articles of Religion: the Twenty-five Articles of Religion are a doctrinal standard for the AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM denominations. They are derived from 24 Articles condensed by John Wesley from the 39 Articles of the Church of England, subsequently revised by the ME Christmas Conference in 1784. The text is given in the Appendix.

Assurance: Historic Methodist teaching maintained that when a person is justified, they experience a divinely given assurance of the forgiveness of sins.
See pages 23, 62–64.

Awakening: An experience typical of early Methodist spirituality in which an individual came to an intense awareness of their own sinfulness and their need for grace; associated with repentance and prevenient grace.
See pages 61–64, 128.
**Baptism:** The sacrament of Christian initiation, recognized as one of two sacraments in Methodist doctrine. See pages 25, 27, 64–65, 74, 79–83, 86, 89, 119–20.

**BEM Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry:** An ecumenical document developed by the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC (1982) and received by the UM Church. See pages 25, 32, 75, 82.

**Bible:** Methodists affirm the primacy, sufficiency, and unity of the Bible and regard devotional Bible study as a means of grace. See pages 35–38, 41, 99–100.

**Bishop:** In historic Methodist teaching, an elder consecrated for oversight in the church; the AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM Churches all use bishops in a central, superintending role in the life of the church. See pages 11, 14, 17, 20, 25–26, 38, 44, 45, 67, 74, 77, 88.

**Catechism on Faith:** Document included in the AME Discipline, known as the "Doctrinal Minutes" in John Wesley's works; especially concerned with issues of sin, justification, assurance, and sanctification (including entire sanctification). See pages 19, 22.

**Catholic, Catholicity:** Embracing the fullness or universality of humankind and the fullness of Christian teaching; one of the four notes of the Church. See pages 18, 31, 74, 107–9, 113.

**Catholic Spirit:** John Wesley's belief in doctrinal latitude, that is, that Christians need to agree only on a brief list of essential doctrines but should allow differences of opinions and modes of worship. See pages 17–18, 33.

**Charity:** In older usage "charity" denoted divine love; more specifically, love shown through works that assist the needy. See pages 104–6.

**Christ:** What Methodists teach about Christ, including teachings about Christ's divine and human natures, is generally consistent with the teachings of other Christian churches. See pages 45–46.

**Christian Perfection:** see Entire Sanctification.

**Church:** Methodists follow a standard Reformation definition of the universal church according to which the Church is characterized by faith, preaching,
and the **sacraments**; Methodists also stress the need for **discipline** and accountability; see also the **four notes of the Church**.

See pages 72–74.

**Church of England:** The national church that originated at the time of the Reformation in England; **John and Charles Wesley** were **priests** of the Church of England, and many early Methodist doctrines were derived from those of the Church of England; the adjective describing the Church of England is **Anglican**.

See pages 24, 26, 46, 53, 56, 73, 75, 77, 78, 81, 85.

**Civil Rights:** Methodist involvement in the civil rights movement was grounded in the historic Methodist **social morality**, which emphasizes the sanctification of society, and undergirded by the **Social Creed**, which calls for recognition of the human rights of all persons.


**Class Meeting/Class Leader:** Early Methodists (from the mid-1740s) were divided into small groups that met weekly to hold one another accountable for their discipleship; the class leader was an important office in the Methodist practice of accountable discipleship.


**CME; Christian Methodist Episcopal Church:** denomination derived from the **MES**, originally "Colored Methodist Episcopal" Church (1870).


**COCU/COCU Consensus:** COCU refers to the Consultations on Church Union, subsequently referred to as Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC). The abbreviation COCU also refers to a proposed Church of Christ Uniting; the **AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM** Churches approved the plan for COCU and in doing so affirmed the **COCU Consensus**, a document laying out the doctrinal and practical grounds for their proposed unity.

See pages 25–26, 75, 77.

**Communion:** see **Lord's Supper**.

**Conferences:** The original Methodist conferences were literally occasions for "conferring" together about their own spirituality and the mission of the Methodist movement; conferences eventually evolved into a more elaborate structure involving **Annual** and **General** conferences.

See pages 14, 17, 78.

**Confession of Faith:** The **UM** Confession of Faith grew out of a short
confession drawn up in the 1810s by the UB; this was subsequently expanded until in the 1950s the EUB Church gave it its current form. See pages 20, 22, 24, 30, 36, 44–47, 74, 82, 103.

**Corporeal Presence:** Teaching about the Lord's Supper according to which the communion elements convey the human, bodily (corporeal) presence of Christ; a view favored by Lutherans and some Anglicans; the Methodist Articles and the UM Confession appear to rule out belief in corporeal presence, although some of Charles Wesley's hymns speak graphically of the reality of Christ's presence in the Super; see also memorialism, real presence, virtualism, and transubstantiation. See pages 84–85.

**Creeds:** Statements of faith on behalf of a Christian community; long Methodist usage has favored the Apostles' Creed, but in the twentieth century Methodists came to use the Nicene Creed as well. See pages 20–21, 23–25, 27, 32, 38, 43–44, 46–47, 74, 90–91, 113–14.

**Deacon/Deaconess:** Historically, Methodist deacons were persons preparing for ordained ministry as elders; the UMC now has an office of permanent deacons; deaconesses were (in the AME Church, are) women consecrated for special ministries, especially of social outreach. See pages 26, 28, 74–75, 78, 110.

**Descent into Hell (Christ's):** The Apostles' Creed asserts that Christ "descended into hell," meaning that Christ went to the place of the dead; because some Methodists took hell to mean the place of judgment, they refused to say this phrase in the creed, and it has become customary among Methodist churches to omit it, although a recognition of the misunderstanding in the meaning of hell through ecumenical contact has led some Methodist churches to return to the original and ecumenical form of the Creed. See pages 46, 114.

**Discipline:** The process by which Christians hold each other accountable for their belief and behavior; in early Methodist circles discipline was especially associated with class meetings and their leaders; because of the centrality of this concept, Methodists give the name Discipline to their books of church order. See pages 21, 23, 27–29, 61, 73, 74, 79, 99–100, 105, 108–9, 111.

**District Superintendent:** see Presiding Elder.

**Divine Nature of Christ:** The divine and human natures of Christ are affirmed in Methodist doctrine, following the consensus first stated at the Council of
Chalcedon, AD 451.
See pages 43–46.

**Doctrine:** Consensus about what to teach; doctrine can be distinguished from theology in general (any critical reflection on religious belief) and from popular religion (what people happen to believe regardless of consensus in communities).
See pages 12, 15–31.

**Dress:** Early Methodist **personal morality** insisted on simplicity of dress. See page 102.

**EA; Evangelical Association:** denomination derived from German-speaking persons associated loosely with the ME Church (organized as a denomination in early 1800s), led at first by Jacob Albright, Martin Boehm, and others; became part of the EUB Church in 1946.
See pages 13, 15.

**Ecumenical Movement:** The movement prominent since the early twentieth century that presupposes the spiritual unity of Christians and seeks their "visible" unity; Methodists have been centrally involved in the Ecumenical Movement, and the Movement has affected Methodist churches (for example, in influencing Methodists to use the Nicene Creed).

**Elder:** The second order of **ordained ministry** after deacons, answering to the office of **priest** in older Christian traditions; Methodist elders are ordained to ministries of "Word, sacrament and order."

**Entire Sanctification:** In Methodist spiritual teaching, entire sanctification is the culmination of the process of **sanctification** in which a person comes by divine **grace** to complete love for God and neighbor; also referred to as **Christian perfection.** See pages 23, 53, 64–69, 96–97, 104.

**Episcopacy/Episcopal:** Referring to the office of **bishop** (Greek episkopos); a form of church polity or government in which bishops play a central role.
See pages 11, 75–77.

**Essential Doctrines:** According to John Wesley, Christians need to agree in essential doctrines, although they may differ widely in **opinions** and manners of worship.
See pages 18–19, 31.

**Eternal Life:** Life shared in eternity with Christ; see also **heaven.** See pages 90, 91.
**Eternal Security**: Belief favored by Reformed tradition and Baptists according to which Christ will keep believers from finally falling away from the faith, thus their "eternal security" is guaranteed; Methodist doctrine rejects the teaching of eternal security, insisting instead that believers can **fall from grace**. See pages 66–67.

**Ethos**: The lifestyle of a community, including its moral outlook. See pages 95–97, 99–101, 104, 106, 111–12.

**EUB; Evangelical United Brethren**: denomination derived from union of EA and UB Churches (1946); became part of the **UMC** in 1968. See pages 15, 77, 111.

**Eucharist**: see **Lord's Supper**.

**Experience**: Methodists have been concerned with the religious experience of persons; the so-called **Wesleyan Quadrilateral** acknowledges experience as a way of interpreting scripture. See pages 30, 35, 37, 39–41, 59–64, 69–70, 79, 103, 117, 120–21.

**Faith**: According to Methodist doctrine, faith involves more than simply assent (believing *that* certain things are true), it must involve heartfelt trust as well. See pages 21, 26–27, 60, 62–64, 66, 72, 80, 84, 85, 88, 91, 97

**Falling from Grace**: Informal term for the Methodist doctrine that an individual may lose faith in Christ and so forfeit their **justification**; John Wesley's sermon on "The Wilderness State" describes this possibility; this teaching stands in opposition to the teaching of **eternal security** favored in other Christian traditions. See pages 66–67, 118.

**Fasting**: Fasting ("or abstinence") is a spiritual discipline for which the **General Rules** hold Methodists accountable. See pages 79, 98, 99, 128.

**Free Will**: Methodist doctrine maintains that as a result of **prevenient** grace, all human beings have the possibility of free consent to God. See pages 53–56, 117.

**Frequent or Constant Communion**: Methodist spiritual teaching from the time of the Wesleys encouraged frequent and regular use of the Lord's Supper, although from the 1800s Methodists became accustomed to infrequent (monthly or quarterly) communion. See pages 86–87.

**Gambling**: Methodists historically opposed all forms of gambling because of...
both its nature as a worldly amusement and its irresponsible use of money or resources; see also stewardship.
See pages 67, 104.

Gender-Specific Language in Reference to God: The belief that God is "without body or parts" (first Article of Religion) makes gender-specific language in reference to God problematic despite the fact that traditional language about God has been heavily masculine; Christians are now seeking discernment as to how they can agree on language about God (especially language to describe the Trinity) that does not involve the problems of genderspecific language. See page 45.

General Conference: In the AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM Churches, the General Conference is the highest representative assembly or conference, and the only body that can alter a denomination's historic doctrinal standards. See page 17.

General Rules: Rules set out in 1743 by John and Charles Wesley as a basis for continuing Methodist identity; the General Rules are protected as doctrinal standards in the AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM Churches; text given in the Appendix. See pages 8, 19, 22, 73, 79, 87, 95, 97, 98–105, 107, 124–28.

German Reformed: Churches of the Reformed Tradition in German states that used the Heidelberg Catechism as their doctrinal standard; Phillip William Otterbein was a German Reformed pastor, and the UB tradition had roots in German Reformed Christianity. See page 13.

God: Methodist teachings about God, including the doctrine of the Trinity, are largely consistent with the teachings of other Christian traditions. See pages 27, 30, 36, 38, 39, 41, 43–45, 48–49, 56, 69, 92–93, 113, 114.

Grace: Divine power as contrasted with human effort or power; Methodists continue the Protestant insistence that salvation is brought about by divine grace; see also prevenient grace. See pages 18, 31, 39, 47, 52–56, 59–70, 78–80, 83, 87–88, 93, 96–98, 112, 117, 118, 119.

Heaven: Eternal fellowship with Christ and with those who have died in the faith; see also eternal life and hell. See page 91.

Hell: In the broadest sense, the place of the dead, not necessarily implying judgment (thus, the Apostles' Creed affirms Christ's descent into hell); in a stricter sense, the place of judgment where the damned are separated from
eternal fellowship with Christ and the saints; see also **heaven** and **eternal life**. See pages 46, 90–91, 114.

**Holiness**: The quality of being "set apart" or consecrated by likeness to the divine; **sanctification** is the process of growth in holiness. See pages 53, 60, 64–67, 92.

**Holiness of the Church**: Holiness is one of the **four notes of the Church**, the church's likeness to the divine, intended by God. See page 74.

**Holy Communion**: see **Lord's Supper**.

**Holy Spirit**: What Methodists teach formally regarding the Holy Spirit is consistent with the teachings of other churches; Methodist spirituality has stressed the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding believers; see also **God** and **Trinity**. See pages 27, 44–49, 113–15, 118.

**Human Condition**: Methodist doctrine insists that all human beings stand in need of divine **grace**; see also **original sin**. See pages 52–54.

**Human Nature of Christ**: Methodist doctrine affirms with historic Christian teaching that Christ had a fully human nature as well as a fully **divine** nature. See pages 45–46.

**Hymns/Hymnals**: Methodist **doctrine** since the time of the **Wesleys** has been expressed and taught in hymns; even the outline of hymnals conveys doctrinal content. See pages 17, 19–21, 23–25, 28–30, 39, 44, 46–48, 60, 61, 63, 70, 82–83, 85, 91, 97, 109–10.

**Inclusiveness of the Church**: see **Catholicity**.

**Infant Baptism**: Methodist churches affirm and practice infant baptism on the grounds of household baptisms in the early church, Jesus' invitation to the children, and children's need for the Christian community. See pages 64–65, 81–83.

**Itinerancy** (or "Itineracy"): "Itinerant" means travelling or moving about from place to place; early Methodist preachers did this quite literally, although since the late 1800s itinerancy has come to denote the distinct Methodist appointive system for **elders** rather than the need for constant travel. See pages 76, 98.

**Judgment**: Methodist doctrine affirms with the historic Christian tradition that Christ will come to be our final judge.
Justice Issues: Methodist social morality has been concerned with justice issues (see the Social Creed) grounded in a concern for the sanctification of society.

Justification, Justifying Grace: Justification is the gracious act of God in restoring human beings to a right relationship with God and thereby forgiving their sins; justifying grace is the divine favor and power by which this is accomplished; Methodist doctrine holds that our justification is by grace through faith.

Kingdom of God: The rule, or reign, of God, to which Christians look forward.
See pages 31, 92–93.

Lay Preaching: The Methodist movement has used lay preachers since the 1740s; Wesley insisted that lay preachers had an "extraordinary ministry" different from that of ordained ministers; Methodist churches have trained and employed lay, or "local," preachers, sometimes empowering them as pastors of local congregations to celebrate the sacraments, though this custom is not universal.
See pages 75, 78.

Local Elders: elders ordained in a local context and authorized to celebrate the sacraments as well as preach. See page 78.

Lord's Day: Methodists historically observed Sunday as a day of rest, as specified in the General Rules.

Lord's Supper: Methodists celebrate the Lord's Supper (also called Holy Communion or the Eucharist) as one of two sacraments instituted by Christ (the term is from 1 Corinthians 11:20).

Love of God: Methodist teaching about God has stressed God's love or compassion for all human beings.
See pages 48–49.

MC; Methodist Church: denomination formed in 1939 from the union of the ME, MES, and MP Churches; became part of the UMC in 1968.
See page 14.

ME; Methodist Episcopal Church: denomination derived from the Church of England, organized at the Christmas Conference in Baltimore (1784) under the leadership of Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury, and other preachers; became
part of the MC in 1939.
See pages 11, 12.

Means of Grace: The normal means, or channels, by which God conveys grace to human beings, including such means as the Lord's Supper, devotional Bible study, prayer, and fasting.

Memorialism: Teaching about the Lord's Supper associated with the Swiss Reformer Ulrich Zwingli (thus "Zwinglianism") according to which the Supper is only a memorial or reminder of Christ's work; see also corporeal presence, real presence, transubstantiation, and virtualism.
See page 84.

MES; Methodist Episcopal Church, South: denomination derived from the ME Church (1845) over the issue of slavery, which this denomination permitted; became part of the MC in 1939.

Ministry: In the broadest sense, the work, or service, of every Christian based on divinely given gifts; in a narrower sense, the work, or service, of those who are ordained.

Mission Statement of the AME Church: A statement of the mission of the AME Church, which emphasizes the historic Methodist concern for social outreach.
See pages 105, 112.

Modes of Baptism: Methodists historically allow three modes of baptism: sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.
See page 83.

Money: see Stewardship.

Moral Law: Methodist spiritual teaching insists (with the Reformed tradition) that although the "ceremonial" law of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) is not binding upon Christians, the moral teachings of the Hebrew Bible, summarized in the Ten Commandments, are binding on Christians.
See pages 65–66.

MP; Methodist Protestant Church: denomination derived from the ME Church (1830) over the issue of episcopacy (bishops), which this denomination opposed; became part of the MC in 1939.
See pages 14, 77, 78.
New Birth: see Regeneration.

Nicene Creed: The most universally affirmed of all Christian creeds, the statement of faith originally adopted by the Council of Nicaea (AD 325) and revised in the later 300s; Methodists have included the Nicene Creed in their hymnals and worship orders since the middle of the twentieth century. See pages 21, 24–25, 38, 43–44, 46–47, 74, 90–92.

Notes of the Church: Four characteristics of the true Church stated by the Nicene Creed and affirmed by the UM Confession of Faith, namely: unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. See page 74.

Open Communion: The long-standing custom of Methodist churches of sharing the Lord’s Supper with members of other churches. See page 86.

Opinions: John Wesley insisted that although Christians needed to agree in essential doctrines, other teachings should be regarded as "opinions" on which disagreement could be allowed. See pages 18–19, 33.

Ordained Ministry: The ministry, or service, of those ordained as deacons or elders, including those consecrated as bishops. See pages 20, 28–29, 74–76, 78.

Order: The term is used in two related senses: (a) the specific forms of ordained ministry, namely, the orders of deacons and elders; (b) the role of elders (including bishops) in ordering, or disciplining, the life of the Christian community. See pages 25–26, 28–29, 74–77, 119.

Original Sin: Methodist doctrine affirms original sin as the "corruption of the nature" of every human being that leads to actual sin; Methodist doctrine does not formally endorse the belief often associated with this in Western Christian tradition, that original sin itself warrants eternal damnation. See pages 53–54, 114–15, 116–17, 121.

Otterbein, Phillip William (1726–1813): German Reformed pastor who was the founder of the UB Church. See page 13.

Outreach: Methodist social morality has always stressed active and personal involvement in outreach to the needy. See pages 104–6.

Pan-Methodist, Commission on Pan-Methodist Unity and Cooperation: In the broadest sense "Pan-Methodist" would refer to all Methodists; in this book we have taken it in a more restricted sense as referring to the four denominations (AME, AME Zion, CME, and UM) that participate in the Commission on Pan-Methodist Unity and Cooperation. See pages 11–12, 15.

Personal Morality: Methodist teachings on personal morality insisted on integrity, strict discipline including avoidance of all occasions to sin, and active service growing from love for God and one's neighbor. See pages 96–97, 100–104.

Personal Nature of God: Methodist doctrine, hymns, and spiritual teachings stress the personal nature of God in addition to the objective power of God. See pages 48–49.

Polity: A form of church government. The Methodist churches considered in this book all have an episcopal polity. See page 11.

Possessions: see Stewardship.

Prayer: The historic Methodist ethos stressed the need for personal and family prayer (the General Rules insist on these) as well as prayer within a Christian congregation. See pages 67, 79, 87, 92, 98, 99–100, 124, 128.

Preaching: Methodism grew from the itinerant preaching of John Wesley and others; Methodists insist that believers should be exposed to "the ministry of the Word" (General Rules) and have historically employed lay, or "local," preachers. See pages 28, 72, 73, 75–76, 78–79, 86–87, 98–99, 105, 118.

Presiding Elder (AME, AME Zion, CME) or District Superintendent (UMC): An elder who presides over a District (subdivision of an Annual Conference) and in this capacity assists the bishop in ordering the life of the church. See page 76.

Prevenient Grace: God's grace "coming before" (Latin preveniens) our believing in Christ; Methodist teaching insists that prevenient grace is universally available and is the ground of human free will.
Preventing Grace: see Prevenient Grace.

Priest: In older Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican), the second order of ordained ministry, whose ministry includes celebration of baptism and the Lord's Supper; John Wesley was a priest of the Church of England, and the Methodist order of elder (a literal translation of the Greek presbyteros) answers to the order of priest in the older traditions. See pages 74–75, 78.

Primacy of Scripture: The teaching upheld in Methodist doctrine according to which the Bible has primary authority in the life of the church. See pages 36–37.

Prohibition: Methodists supported efforts for the prohibition of alcoholic beverages as a social extension of their concern for temperance or abstinence. See pages 103–4.

Purgatory: The belief rejected in Methodist doctrine according to which the souls of believers in the period between death and the final judgment are purified and can be assisted by the prayers of living persons. See pages 91–92, 119.

Real Presence: A term favored by many Anglicans to describe teachings about the Lord's Supper according to which there is a "real" presence of Christ conveyed by the sacrament, without specifying whether this presence is corporeal or a distinct spiritual power (virtualism). See pages 85–86.

Reason: John Wesley believed that human reason aided by divine grace could assist in interpreting the Bible; the UM statement of "Our Theological Task" affirms the use of reason along with tradition and experience as a means of interpreting scripture; see also the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

Rededication, Renewal: Methodist teaching on sanctification calls for consistent rededication, or renewal, of our relationship to the Savior. See pages 66–67.

Reformed Tradition: The broad Christian tradition associated with Zwingli and Calvin and represented by both Presbyterian and Congregational churches; the UMC has roots in the Reformed tradition by way of Phillip William Otterbein and the UB Church. See pages 13, 66, 73, 81, 82, 84.
**Regeneration:** The gracious act of **God** by which we are born again (Latin *regeneratio,* "new birth") to life in **Christ.**
See pages 64–65, 81, 120.

**Reign of God:** see **Kingdom of God.**

**Renewal:** see **Rededication.**

**Repentance:** According to Methodist spiritual teachings, the Christian life begins with repentance (brought about by **prevenient grace**) and the process of **sanctification** involves continual repentance for remaining **sin.**
See pages 23, 31, 60–62, 64, 82, 97, 118, 128

**Sacraments:** Acts instituted by Christ having an outward form and conveying divine grace; according to Methodist doctrine the two sacraments are **baptism** and the **Lord's Supper;** sacraments should be seen as related to the broader category of **means of grace.**

**Salvation Army:** An organization that seceded from the Methodist New Connexion in Britain in the mid-1800s, carrying on the historic Wesleyan witness for **social outreach.**
See pages 105–6.

**Sanctification/Sanctifying Grace:** Sanctification is the process of growth in holiness (Latin *sanctus,* "holy" or "saint"). Sanctifying grace is the divine **grace** or power by which this occurs.
See pages 23, 56, 60, 64–69, 96–97, 104.

**Scripture:** see **Bible.**

**Second Coming of Christ:** Methodist doctrine acknowledges with the scriptures and historic **creeds** that Christ will return to judge all humankind; Methodist doctrine does not speculate as to when or how this will occur.
See pages 92–93.

**Sexual Morality:** Historic Methodist **personal morality** insisted on sexual purity, including the avoidance of all occasions of sexual temptation (such as dance).
See pages 101–2, 111.

**Sin:** Methodists insist on the universality of sin in humankind (see **universal need for grace**), and the possibility of healing, or salvation, from sin through **justification** (which includes forgiveness) and **sanctification** (which includes divinely given power over remaining sin).
Slavery/Slaveholding: Methodist social morality included opposition to slavery, and the ME Discipline of 1808 specified slaveholding as an evil to be avoided by Methodists. The schism of the MES Church from the ME Church came about over the issue of slaveholding. See also Abolition of Slavery. See pages 12, 14, 67, 96, 106–7, 111, 126.

Social Morality: Social morality included active involvement in social reform and political action designed to alleviate social conditions; for Methodists, this was seen as one aspect of the sanctification of the world. See pages 20, 22–23, 67, 69, 93, 96, 104–11.

Speech: Methodist personal morality was concerned with issues of speech, urging believers to speak reverently of God and respectfully of other persons. See page 101.

Steward: A permanent lay office in Methodist churches; Methodist stewards (discontinued in the UMC) have ongoing responsibility for the oversight of their congregations' ministries. See pages 78, 125.

Stewardship: Careful and responsible use of the blessings God has given us; Methodists encourage careful stewardship of money and other possessions. See pages 102–4, 106.

Sufficiency of Scripture: The Methodist teaching (inherited from the Church of England), which maintains that the Bible contains everything we need to know for salvation. See pages 36–37, 115–16, 128.

Sunday: see Lord's Day. Swearing: Methodist personal morality regarding speech ruled out swearing as inappropriate and irreverent. See pages 101, 123.

Temperance: Methodists recognized the danger of strong alcoholic beverages early on and encouraged carefully controlled consumption (temperance); growing recognition of alcohol-related problems caused Methodists eventually to advocate total abstinence from alcohol. See pages 103–4.

Tradition: That which we value from the past; Methodist teachings on religious authority acknowledge the value of Christian tradition as a means of interpreting the Bible; see also Wesleyan Quadrilateral. See pages 18, 21, 26, 28, 35, 36, 38–41, 55, 91.

Transubstantiation: Roman Catholic teaching concerning the Lord's Supper rejected in Methodist Articles and UM Confession according to which the
bread and wine are replaced with the substance of Christ's body and blood; not to be confused with corporeal presence; see also real presence, virtualism, and memorialism. See pages 84–85, 120–21.

Trinity: The teaching about God affirmed at the Council of Nicaea (AD 325) and stated in the Nicene Creed according to which the one God exists as three equal and eternal Persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), rejecting the Arian teaching that Christ was a created being subordinate to the Father; this doctrine is affirmed in historic Methodist doctrine and worship. See pages 18, 20, 23, 27, 30, 43–49, 114.

UB United Brethren in Christ: denomination derived from German Reformed and other Germanspeaking congregations (from late 1700s; organized as a denomination in early 1800s), led at first by Phillip William Otterbein in Baltimore; became part of the EUB Church in 1946. See pages 13, 15, 22, 26.

UM[C] United Methodist [Church]: denomination derived from the union of the MC and EUB Churches in 1968. See pages 7, 11, 15, 28, 40–41, 47, 60–61, 74, 103.

Unity of Scripture: Methodist teaching about the Bible according to which there is a unity underlying the canonical books, which focuses on the central message of human salvation in Christ. See pages 35, 37–38, 116.

Unity of the Church: One of the four notes of the Church; Methodists affirm in the Nicene Creed and the UM Confession that the Church, as intended by God, is one; the ground of our ecumenical work. See pages 74, 75.

Universal Availability of Grace: Methodist teaching according to which God intends for all human beings to be saved and makes grace (prevenient grace) available to all. See pages 54–56, 59, 109–10.

Universal Need for Grace: Methodist teaching, consistent with that of other churches, according to which human beings cannot save themselves, and thus all stand in need of divine grace or assistance. See pages 52–54, 59.

Virtualism: Teaching about the Lord's Supper according to which the elements of bread and wine convey a unique spiritual power (Latin, virtus) as if Christ were bodily present; this teaching is consistent with the Methodist Articles,
and the terminology of "virtue" (meaning "divine power") in the Supper is expressed in Charles Wesley's hymns; see also corporeal presence, memorialism, real presence, and transubstantiation. See pages 84–85.

**Way of Salvation:** The process of salvation from the beginnings of God's work under prevenient grace through justification and sanctification expressed in historic Methodist doctrinal statements (including Wesley's Sermons) and in the structure of Methodist hymnals. See pages 18, 20, 23, 36, 47, 48, 52, 59–70.

**WCC World Council of Churches: Ecumenical** organization in which the Pan-Methodist churches all participate; the WCC's Faith and Order Commission has developed a number of consensus documents, including BEM. See pages 25, 43, 75, 82.


**Wesleyan Quadrilateral:** The use of the Bible, tradition, reason, and experience as a method for theological reflection; although John Wesley himself did not lay out the Quadrilateral as such, he did use scripture, reason, and experience and had reference to particular moments from the Christian past; the Wesleyan Quadrilateral was first expressed in the UM statement of Our Theological Task. See pages 40–41.

**Worship:** The expression of ultimate, or final, valuing; public worship is enjoined upon Methodists as an "ordinance of God" in the General Rules. See pages 17, 19, 23, 25, 28, 30, 38–39, 44–45, 48, 49, 79, 98–99, 110, 119, 128.

**Zwinglianism:** see "Memorialism."
“Let us hold fast the essentials of the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

—John Wesley

In this concise, accessible book, Dr. Ted Campbell provides a brief summary of the major doctrines shared in the Wesleyan family of denominations. Writing in concise and straightforward language, Campbell organizes the material into systematic categories: doctrine of revelation, doctrine of God, doctrine of Christ, doctrine of the Spirit, doctrine of humanity, doctrine of “the way of salvation” (conversion, justification, sanctification), doctrine of the church and means of grace, and doctrine of things to come. He also supplies substantial but simplified updated references in the margins of the book that allow for easy identification of his sources.

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—Bishop Gregory G. M. Ingram, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Tenth Episcopal District

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