THE STORY *of* THE WESLEYAN CHURCH

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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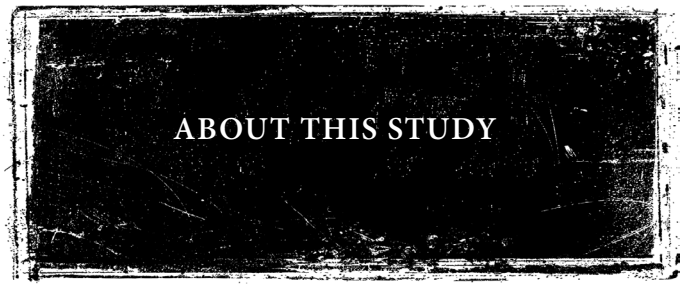
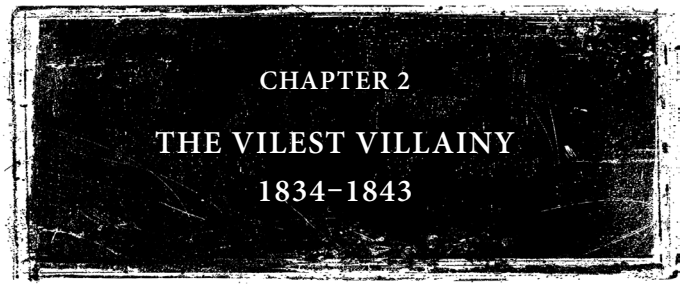


The following discussion questions may enable a group or class to dig deeper into the contents of the book, analyzing and applying the issues for today and the future of The Wesleyan Church. If the questions are assigned to students, assignments should be made in advance since some questions require research beyond the book.

CHAPTER 1

NEW CHURCH, OLD ROOTS

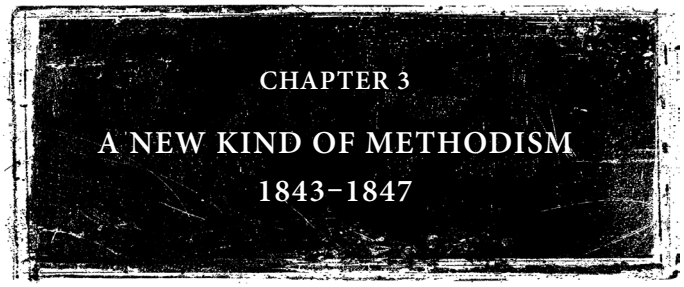
1. Contrast the atmosphere in Anderson, Indiana, with the atmosphere in North America when the Pilgrims and Wesleyan Methodists merged in 1968. How might these be related or unrelated to each other?
2. From what you have already read of the original Wesleyan Methodist Church in America, what similarities do you see between it and the ministry of John Wesley in the British Isles? What similarities do you see between John Wesley and The Wesleyan Church of today?
3. Wesley taught that a person could know they were saved when most thought you could only hope but never know for sure. How broadly would you say Wesley's approach to "assurance" is accepted today among Christians?
4. How do you think American Methodists wound up bishops when Wesley opposed the idea? Why do you think Wesley, and many after him, opposed the notion of a church governed by powerful bishops?
5. Who would be similar today to the Methodist circuit riding preacher? What would that ministry look like today?
6. In what way did the mother of the American Holiness Movement, Phoebe Palmer, seem to modify John Wesley's own approach to holiness? How do you think this difference might relate to the North American frontier mentality and the American culture compared to the British people and British culture?
7. The Methodists were latecomers to America who rather quickly became the largest denomination in the country. To what factors would you attribute their explosive growth?
8. What is the United Methodist Church's present written position on holiness, "perfect love," or "entire sanctification?" Can you find it? How much does it differ from the present Wesleyan written position? *(Research required.)*



CHAPTER 2

THE VILEST VILLAINY
1834–1843

1. The American Methodist church originally banned slavery in their *Discipline,* yet compromised their stance when resistance arose. If you were a Methodist in that day, what possible arguments might you have made for softening the tough rule against slavery?
2. Trace the compromises Methodists made on slavery. Does any issue in today's church require compromise? What issues are worth division?
3. What do you think is today's equivalent of slavery as a social issue? In this current battle, who would be the "abolitionists" or "immediatists" and who would be the "gradualists"?
4. When Orange Scott's fallback amendment failed 123–15 at the Methodist general conference, what advice would you have given the young man if you had been there?
5. When is it time to quit a denomination? A local church? What line must be crossed today for you to leave your denomination and join or start another?
6. The original *True Wesleyan* masthead said, "First pure, then peaceful." For which of today's divisive issues are you willing to let purity rule over peacefulness? On which issues would you let peacefulness rule over purity?
7. The new denomination promised it would be free of both slavery and bishops. Why do you think "bishops" got into the mix with slavery right from the beginning?

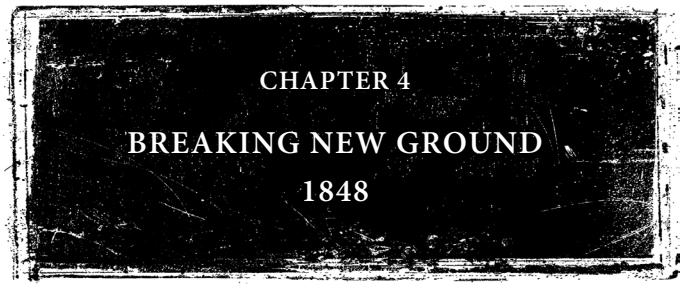


CHAPTER 3

A NEW KIND OF METHODISM
1843–1847

1. Ohio's Edward Smith received "the ecclesiastical guillotine" for his antislavery activities and thus was bishop-shy, as were other founders of the Wesleyan Methodists. So, how could this new bishop-less denomination exercise power over members and ministers who might (for instance) *not* oppose slavery? How does a denomination with powerless leaders maintain its convictions among the ministers and members?
2. Denominational names both describe and differentiate denominations. Compare what these two denominational names in their titles announce about each denomination: *The Methodist Episcopal Church* and *the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America*.
3. What are the dangers of a totally episcopal form of church government? What are the dangers of a totally congregational form? Describe the "middle way" which the first Wesleyan Methodists chose. What advantages and disadvantages does that middle way of church government offer?
4. Wesleyan Methodists provided far greater power to the laity than the Methodists. What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of giving laity 50% of the voting power in conferences?
5. Wesleyan Methodism was the first denomination in America to make abstinence from alcohol a test of membership. What was happening in the mid 1800s that would have made them even think of adding this membership rule? What happened afterward in America related to abstinence and temperance? *(Research required.)*
6. What do you think were the factors that caused many to oppose secret societies—especially the Masons? How does this relate to women's rights and/or equality for black people? The West took a harder line than the East on this; what are the issues on which regions in the denomination today differ? Which things should be left to districts and regions to decide and which should be determined by the entire North American church? How about the international church?

7. What do you think were the arguments for and against infant baptism in the new denomination? What do you think of the compromise made for ministers who opposed infant baptism? What issue today might require a similar compromise?
8. The 1844 split between northern and southern Methodists preceded the Civil War by seventeen years. In what ways do you think the church—both North and South—could have helped avoid the war? Should they have? When is war an acceptable option in order to accomplish a good thing? Over what issues should the church today be willing to support war?
9. One year after the Wesleyan Methodists organized as a denomination, the Methodists split North and South. The northern Methodist church now had a strong stance against slavery. How was the Wesleyan Methodists' secession and growth a factor in this? If you were a Wesleyan Methodist at that time—just a year after organizing—would you be inclined to return to the Methodist Episcopal Church (North) now that you had "won?" Why or why not?
10. What do you see as the major differences between life in today's Wesleyan Church and the church life of the Wesleyan Methodists of the mid-nineteenth century? What aspects of their church life remain today? What was lost or discarded?
11. Just four years into the life of the new denomination, its primary founder and charismatic leader Orange Scott was dead. Put yourself in the shoes of someone in the denomination in 1847. What major questions do you think would have been raised by his death?

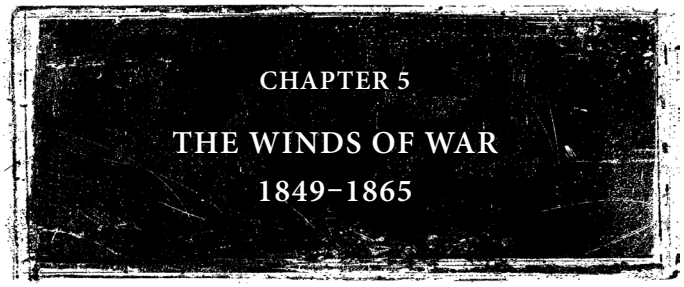


CHAPTER 4

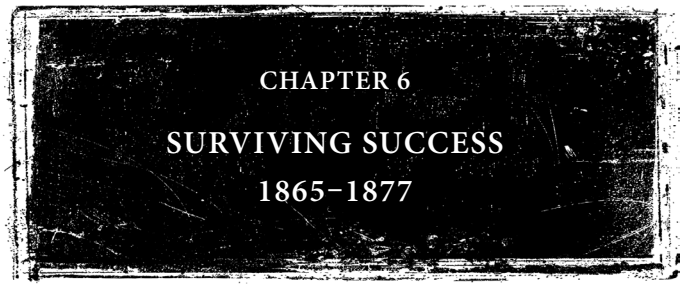
BREAKING NEW GROUND
1848

1. Adam Crooks was bothered by the apathy in his Methodist Protestant denomination over slavery. Who were the Methodist Protestants and why did they leave the Methodist church? Where are they today? *(Research required.)*
2. When forty abolitionist Methodists in North Carolina left their church to start an abolitionist congregation, they asked for a Wesleyan Methodist pastor. Using your imagination, compare how different the experiences of an abolitionist in New York would be with one in North Carolina. Who went to serve this congregation, and how old was he? How might his age have been a factor?
3. The Manumission Society tried to banish slavery by encouraging slaveholders to free their slaves voluntarily. Contrast that persuasive approach with the coercive approach the radical abolitionists took, and then give examples of how those two approaches (persuasion vs. coercion) might play out on some issue today—you pick the issue. Which approach do you favor in the nation and in the church? On which issues would you prefer persuasion over coercion and vice versa?
4. In the first four years of planting the Wesleyan Methodist church in North Carolina, five hundred people joined up. If you were planting an abolitionist church in North Carolina in 1850, what would your church planting strategy have been?
5. Describe some of the prices paid by Wesleyan Methodists in the South at this time. What issue today for you would be worth paying a similar personal price?
6. What about the Wesleyan Methodists would naturally incline them to be proponents of women's rights at the time—that is, how does the issue of women's rights relate to other Wesleyan Methodist issues like opposition to slavery, alcohol, secret societies, and bishops or support for holiness and more power for the laity? What issues today would you say come in clusters and seem to be connected?

7. Try to read between the lines on the early Wesleyan Methodist's two statements on entire sanctification—the one initially proposed and the one finally adopted. What might have been behind the debate between advocates of the proposed statement and others who wanted it revised? *(Research required.)*
8. Wesleyan Methodists were the first religious body to have an explicit statement on entire sanctification even though many denominations preached the experience, including the Methodists. If a new denomination were being formed today, what sort of new statements might it add which are not a part of the traditional statements denominations make but are so popular today most folk would want a statement made in a new denomination?

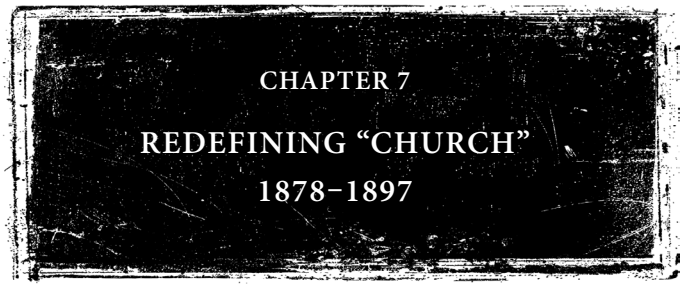


1. Wesleyan Methodists boldly announced they would disobey the new federal law requiring the return of fugitive slaves. On what issue today are Christians willing to disobey the law? What new laws might Christians be willing to disobey and pay the consequences?
2. Laura Smith Haviland and other Wesleyan Methodists were active on the Underground Railroad, disobeying the Fugitive Slave Law. In what ways would hiding illegal immigrants today be similar to or different from this?
3. What do you think of Aaron Worth jumping bail and fleeing north? How does a person know when "God's law" trumps civil law? What are the guidelines for deciding such a thing?
4. Can you find any evidence today of the early Wesleyan Methodist churches among slaves in Canada or among Native Americans in Minnesota, Ohio, and New York? *(Research required.)*
5. The early Wesleyan Methodists were unimpressed with Abraham Lincoln because of what they considered to be his lukewarm stance on slavery. What do you know of Salmon Chase and Gerrit Smith, and what does this tell you about Wesleyan Methodists at the time? *(Research required.)*
6. Wesleyan Methodists ordained Mary Will in 1861, the second woman in American history to be ordained. What was the response at the following general conference of those opposed to women's ordination? How might both sides of the debate on this question have sounded? What arguments might they have made?
7. From the subtitle of the denomination's hymnal, *Miriam's Timbrel*, what does it appear to say about the concerns of the church at the time? If hymnals still had extended subtitles describing their concerns like they did in the 19th century, what would today's Wesleyan hymnal (if there were such a thing) probably say?



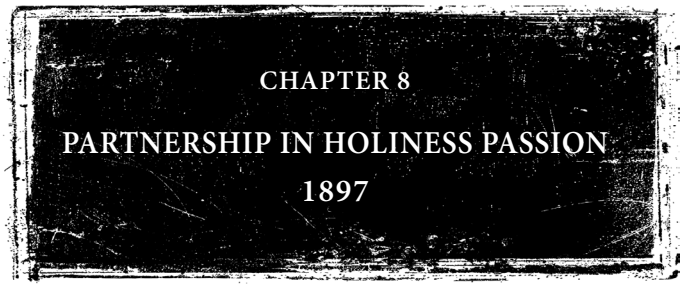
1. Slavery was the one unifying issue for all Wesleyan Methodists. They disagreed on some other matters, even those they put in their *Discipline*. So when the Civil War settled the slavery issue, what do you think would be your arguments both for and against returning to Methodism after 1865?
2. As slavery evaporated as the core issue for Wesleyan Methodists, what new postwar issues would you have adopted at the time as a single unifying cause?
3. What would probably have happened to Wesleyan Methodists today if they had merged with the Methodist Protestants as a result of the "Union Movement? *(Research required.)*
4. How do you think losing Adrian College affected the Wesleyan Methodist mind-set toward higher education afterward? The Wesleyan Church today?
5. With virtually all of the prominent leaders returning to the Methodist Episcopal Church, list the remaining issues that bound together those who stayed in the Wesleyan Methodist Connection. How would you prioritize them as to which ones were most important?
6. How were the postwar causes different from or similar to the cause of antislavery for the Wesleyan Methodists?
7. In what ways was the postwar work of Laura Smith Haviland a template for continuing the slavery cause of the Wesleyan Methodists? If Laura Smith Haviland were alive today, what sort of issues do you suspect she and the early Wesleyan Methodists would be involved with?
8. From the Republican Party's views on abolition to their opposition to Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction policies, early Wesleyan Methodists were highly active in politics and political issues. How would you describe from your imagination how the Holiness Revival swept America and became a new "first cause" for Wesleyan Methodists?

9. The Wesleyan Methodists faced the challenge of surviving their success. What other successes can a denomination (or local church or college) experience that might be hard to survive? Can you list some recent successes that have become challenges?



1. Liberalism at the turn of the 20th century was an attempt to fashion a belief system that accommodated contemporary culture, particularly adapting to the scientific theories of the 19th century. While modern evangelicals have stood firm on most doctrinal matters, they are adept at accommodating *methods* to modern culture. How do current Wesleyans accommodate to the culture methodologically? In what ways is cultural accommodation good, and what are the dangers?
2. Methodists Charles and John Wesley along with Wesleyan Methodists Clara Tear Williams and Frank Graham wrote songs about their religious experiences, and Wesleyans sang them. They formed and expressed the denomination's beliefs. If you analyzed today's music in your local church, what core beliefs about religious experiences would they affirm and express?
3. Wesleyan Methodists somewhat revised Luther Lee's original plan for a connection (instead of a denomination). How do you think Wesleyans would be different today if the Wesleyan Methodists had never moved beyond connectionalism?
4. Adam Crooks' first step in moving beyond connectionalism was to establish a publishing house. Why would a publishing house be so critical for the future of a denomination? Why not start with other kinds of offices? If you were Adam Crooks, what would have been *your* first five steps in leading a connection toward becoming more of a denomination?
5. Wesleyan Methodists (along with the Pilgrim Holiness Church later) tried a plan to fund denominational ministries that assessed money based on membership. Both plans failed. What do you believe possibly could have been the arguments against basing assessments on income—a plan which most think is obvious today?
6. Why do you think it took fifty years for the Wesleyan Methodists to develop their first camp meeting grounds? Why would they suddenly start establishing their own camp grounds near the turn of the 20th century? *(Research may be needed.)*

7. What lessons do you think the Wesleyan Methodists learned from losing so many educational institutions in their early years?
8. How would you compare the approach and attitude of the first Wesleyan Methodist missionaries to missionary work today? How was it different? Similar? Better? Worse?
9. What would have been the distinct advantages and disadvantages the leaders might have considered for organizing specific African-American districts instead of having those churches in regular districts? How would this situation compare with Hispanic or Korean districts in the current world? If a cultural or racial group *wants* to be its own district, is that reason enough to do it today or would you refuse? What would you think of other non-geographical districts today—like districts of all megachurches, all rural churches, or all inner city churches?
10. Virtually all early Wesleyan Methodist leaders were postmillennial, but by the turn of the 20th century premillennialism was rising and would soon sweep through America's conservative churches, even the Wesleyans (although they never took an official position on it). How would a postmillennialist today see the world and the work of the church differently from a premillennialist?



1. Compare and contrast Seth Cook Rees and Martin Wells Knapp as leaders and persons—how were they alike and how were they different? Which one do you think had the original idea to found the International Holiness Union and Prayer League and may have recruited the other? Why do you think this?
2. Imagine yourself a Methodist pastor or bishop at the time. How might you have complained about "those holiness people" in the church? What do you think irritated them about their members who supported the Holiness Movement?
3. Can you think of any other fellowships, organizations, or ministries that have risen up where a cause is not fully embraced in local churches? What do you think is the role of parachurch organizations in the larger body of Christ? What are the possible benefits and dangers of parachurch movements? If there were to be a new "union" organized today to promote or preserve a cause in the church, on what issue might that be organized?
4. What do you think of the simplicity of the original four-page constitution of the pre-Pilgrim Union with its single sentence membership requirement? Do you think today's membership requirements should be shorter like this? What would you delete from today's membership commitments? What would you add? Compare the first Union/Pilgrim constitution with the first Wesleyan Methodist organizing documents, and then make several observations on the different approaches of these two streams.
5. What do you think of the notion of doing away with all denominations, a notion that was prevalent at the turn of the 20th century? What makes this idea popular? In what ways is the Church of God (Anderson) *actually* different from a denomination? How do you see today's independent churches, especially churches like Willow Creek, relating to the come-outers' approach? Do you think all denominations should merge into one denomination again or

split up so that every individual church is independent? What are the disadvantages and advantages of denominations?

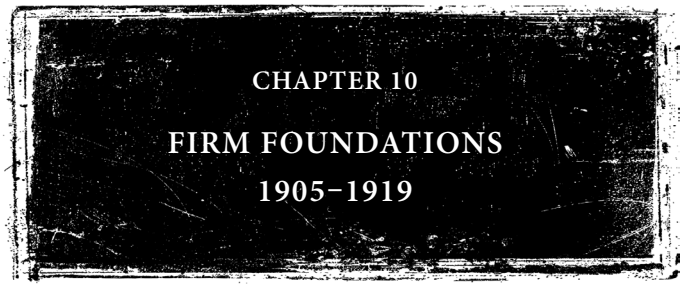
6. The people who would become Pilgrims paid little attention to structure or denominational procedures. They were a get-it-done people not accustomed to asking permission of anybody to do anything. What do you think are the benefits of such an approach to ministry? What are the dangers? Where do you see such an approach promoted today?

CHAPTER 9

A DIVERSITY OF MINISTRIES
1898–1905

1. What do you think of the bold, government-defying approach of Martin Wells Knapp and God's Bible School to ministry in Cincinnati? How does this connect with the early Wesleyan Methodist story? Can you tell any stories of similar ministries that are more recent?
2. God's Bible School bequeathed a daring get-it-done approach to the people who became Pilgrims, but eventually the denomination and GBS drifted apart. What do you think are the dominant educational institutions in today's Wesleyan Church, and what kind of spirit are they bequeathing to today's members and ministers? What is the most influential nondenominational entity among Wesleyans today?
3. Charles and Lettie Cowman went out as missionaries from God's Bible School. Lettie died in 1960 as an ordained Pilgrim minister. Yet they founded the Oriental Missionary Society as an independent mission, and the resulting denomination in Korea is now almost three times larger than the entire Wesleyan Church. So, why do you think this work did not remain a Pilgrim field? Was that a good thing or bad? How would such a thing happen today? *(Some research required beyond guessing.)*
4. The movement began to have two streams early on—an interdenominational stream represented by God's Bible School and its many ministries, and a second stream that was headed toward becoming a denomination. William Godbey's strong disclaimer of denominational intent at GBS in 1901 shows what the accusations were . . . that these folk were secretly trying to build a denomination out of an interdenominational movement. GBS wanted to remain interdenominational while others began to see the advantage of becoming a denomination, even planting churches. If you were going as a missionary to a country that already had Christian churches, would you be inclined to work with the people already in churches like the GBS strain did, or would you start your own new churches like the denominational strain was inclined to do? What causes movements to shift toward becoming denominations?

5. The *Revivalist* was functionally the most popular magazine of the people who would become Pilgrims even though it wasn't officially a denominational publication. What is the chief religious media influence on Wesleyans today—a magazine, website, or event that is not denominational but has great influence among today's Wesleyans?
6. Why do you think Rees resigned as general superintendent of the Union? We don't know for sure, but what is your guess? Explain.
7. What do you think of the idea of using "missionary offerings" for non-foreign missionary work? Are you with Rees or the GBS mission board on this issue? What guidelines would you give for such fundraising? What are the dangers of each approach?
8. The Wesleyan Methodists almost closed down the work in North Carolina at this time but gave it a reprieve. It later became one of the strongest districts. If you were on the committee of three examining a dying local church today and you had the power to close it or leave it open, what criteria would guide that decision?
9. In 1903 the Wesleyan Methodists endorsed a single political party . . . not the Republicans or Democrats, but the Prohibitionist Party. What party would you think today's Wesleyans in the USA would be inclined to support if they ever decided to make such an endorsement? In Canada? What do you think of a denomination endorsing one particular political party and calling on its members to vote accordingly?
10. Wesleyan Methodists were against slavery and secret societies and for women's rights and prohibition. How would you connect this cluster of social reform issues?



1. The Holiness Union which would later become the Pilgrim Holiness Church was essentially a parachuch organization when George Kulp took over as General Superintendent after Rees resigned. In the next sixteen years he made gigantic progress in turning the parachurch organization into a denomination. What do you think are the "marks" of a denomination? That is, what would a parachurch organization have to change for it to become a denomination?
2. What do you think would have happened if the Union had simply remained a parachurch organization with all the members continuing to belong to their own denominations?
3. The railroad discount influenced the Holiness Union's decision to expand its *Manual*. Can you think of any other instance in history (or today) when an external factor caused the church to make internal changes or take significant actions?
4. The new 1905 Union board had neither of the founders present. (Knapp had died and Rees had resigned). What parallels can you see here to Wesleyan Methodist history?
5. What do you think the leaders of the interdenominational work of the Revivalist/GBS might have thought about the actions of the 1913 general assembly of the Union?
6. What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a "Bible school denomination" versus being a liberal arts college denomination?
7. Discuss the independent, raise-your-own-support approach to missions taken by the group that would become Pilgrims. What is good about this approach? Bad? Which approach is used most now? Which do you expect to prevail in the future?
8. What do you think the arguments would have been at the time for establishing Wesleyan Methodist schools in rural or small town locations instead of in cities?
9. Compare and contrast the two denominations as they both moved toward becoming a full-fledged denomination. What was different? Similar?

10. How do you think the Modernist-Fundamentalist debate would have affected you had you been in the church at that time? What are the similar *doctrinal* debates today?
11. Think about how the term *Pentecostal* has shifted meaning over time. Can you think of other labels and terms that have shifted meaning so that some Christians quit calling themselves what they used to call themselves?
12. Sometimes denominations and local churches (even individuals) define themselves mostly by what they are *not* (not liberals, not Pentecostals, not members of the World Council of Churches). How might this tendency show itself today—that is, how might the church tend to define itself by *what it is not* today?

CHAPTER 11

HOLINESS AND THE ROARING TWENTIES 1919–1929

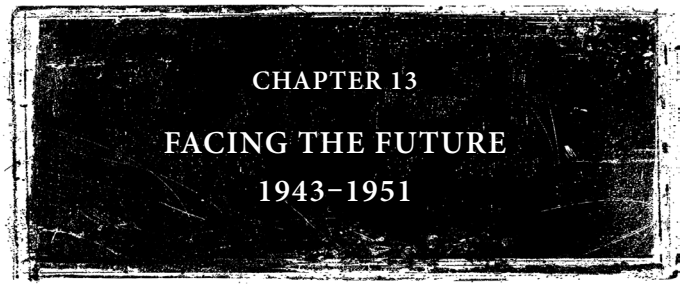
1. Liberal Christians joined ranks with conservatives on the issue of Prohibition. Can you think of any issues today where liberals and conservatives are united?
2. Premillennial views continued to gain ground in the '20s. Why do you think that was? How would you connect "the Great Reversal" with the changing beliefs about eschatology in the church as premillennial approaches became more popular than postmillennial ones?
3. How did liberals and conservatives define salvation differently? Why was it not easy to hold both social action and personal salvation views as John Wesley did? Which is the more popular view today? Which is gaining ground?
4. While Wesleyan Methodists were committed to total abstinence from alcohol, their ban against tobacco for members did not happen until later. Why was this? Can you think of anything else the church did not ban initially but did so later—anything in the last fifty years? Why does this happen? Can you imagine any bans your generation might add in the future that are absent today?
5. The people who would become Pilgrims went through eight mergers in the 1920s and actually became Pilgrims as the result of one of these mergers. What made this denomination so open to merge with other bodies? What did they offer to a small mini-denomination that would make them want to join? What did the larger denomination get out of these mergers?
6. What can you find out about the "rest of the story" in the Seth Rees—Nazarene incident in Pasadena? What are your opinions about this conflict? *(Research required.)*
7. When British officials expected a man and not a woman to head up the missionary work in Swaziland, what would you have done—send a man to "rescue the mission" or refuse and support a woman as the leader as the GBS/Revivalist board did? Why?

8. In this period Wesleyan Methodists began to promote "storehouse tithing," and it solved many of the denomination's financial problems. Wesleyan Methodists defined the storehouse as the *local* church. What do you think of this approach? Is it OK for a person to designate where their tithe goes . . . for example, to give part of their tithe to missions? How about to parachurch agencies? How about other nonprofits like the United Way?

CHAPTER 12

MIDCOURSE CORRECTIONS 1930–1943

1. Mainline churches stagnated or declined during the depression while holiness churches grew. Why do you think that was?
2. Before 1930, the Pilgrims had three general superintendents, two for the homeland and one for foreign missions. In 1930 they went to a single general superintendent and chose the aging Rees. Why is it that both denominations continued (and the merged denomination continues) to switch back and forth on the number of GSs? What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of a singular GS versus several GSs?
3. What else can you discover about the "Finch Dissention" and the resulting two mini-denominations that split from the Pilgrims in Colorado? Do they still exist? What do you think was going on behind the scenes in this conflict? *(Research required.)*
4. The Pilgrims' new financial plan was a colossal flop. Why? How do Wesleyans today finance missions, education, and the headquarters? What potentially better plan for the future would you design? What are the possible negative impacts of your plan?
5. What else can you discover about Seth Rees' life of ministry? *(Research required.)*
6. How did the Pilgrim's Walter Surbrook differ from Rees and other past Pilgrim leaders? In what way do denominations (and local churches) often choose leaders quite different from the past one? Why?
7. Both denominations experienced significant growth using a fivefold strategy. If you were to create a similar fivefold growth strategy for today, what would it include?
8. To what factors do you attribute the Pilgrims' astonishing growth rate—not just at the beginning, but steadily for sixty years?

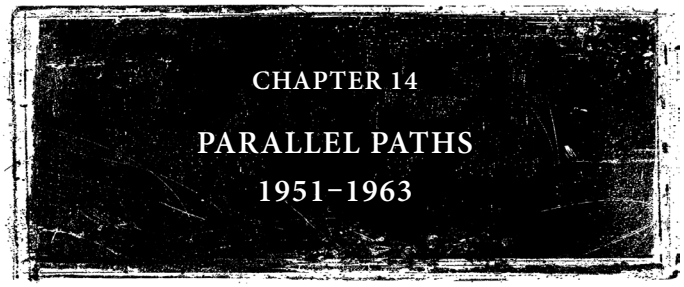


CHAPTER 13

FACING THE FUTURE
1943–1951

1. The religious decline of the Depression and war years was replaced by unprecedented church growth in the late 1940s and through the 1950s. Why do you think that was? If your country had a revival or a spiritual awakening, how would you know it?
2. The 1947 report on structure presented to the Wesleyan Methodist General Conference was a critical turning point for the denomination. Explain.
3. The Wesleyan Methodists in this period adopted their third name change. Using all three names, summarize how they reflected each stage of this denomination's organization.
4. Roy Nicholson ("Mr. Wesleyan Methodist") is considered to be one of the Wesleyan Methodists' most important leaders. Why do you think that is?
5. How did the rise of "evangelicalism" provide a new option to the old Modernist-Fundamentalist dichotomy? What was the reaction of both denominations to this new movement? What were the potentially positive and negative consequences to this association?
6. What were the "unintended consequences" of the GI Bill as relates to both the six struggling Bible schools of the Pilgrims and also the number of women pastors?
7. Wesleyan Methodists had periodic merger talks with the Free Methodists over the years but finally wound up merging with the Pilgrims. Why do you think merger between the Wesleyan Methodists and Free Methodists kept failing while the (less likely?) one with the Pilgrims eventually succeeded?
8. In the postwar building boom (and in the thirty years following), the Pilgrims made a substantial change in locations of local churches. This also meant a change in the people it ministered to. Disappearing were downtown missions and multiplying were attractive conventional churches at the edge of town. How did this simple location change affect the mission of the Pilgrims and who they became?

9. Describe how the wedding ring conflict was "resolved" in 1950 for Pilgrims. What parts of the *Discipline* today are tests of membership and which parts are advisory?
10. Tracing the title and description of the *Discipline's* "Membership Commitments" since merger, describe the changes and what they imply. How do these changes relate to current membership issues? *(Research required.)*



1. Skyline Wesleyan Church in Lemon Grove, California has been one of the denomination's most influential local churches. What are the factors besides size that you think make a local church become influential in the whole denomination and beyond?
2. What similarities do you find between the two denominations in their tangles with more conservative segments of their membership? What differences?
3. Roy Nicholson ruled that a district cannot enforce more conservative standards than the denomination had adopted. If your own district (or local church) were to be "more conservative" than the entire denomination today, in what area would that be? What might be a future issue where a local church or a district might insist on being more conservative than the denomination?
4. What dangers of misunderstanding among the Pilgrims did the Wesleyan Methodists risk when they rebuilt their headquarters in Marion after it was destroyed by a tornado? What other options might they have considered before rebuilding?
5. As the baby boomer population had children who grew up, both denominations launched CYC and youth ministries as a response to this massive influx of children and teens. What are the future population demographics that might affect the church in the next twenty-five years? *(Research required.)*
6. While both denominations stood firmly for civil rights, the vast majority of Wesleyan Methodists and Pilgrims stood on the sidelines during the civil rights struggles. What were the factors that caused this?
7. What factors persuaded the Wesleyan Methodists to decisively reject merger with the Free Methodists in 1955? *(Research required.)*

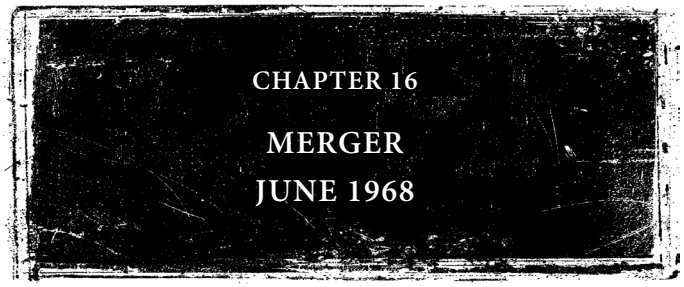
8. If one person had changed his or her vote, the Wesleyan Methodist and Pilgrim general conferences would have approved merger in the late 1950s. Do you know of any other instance where history was altered by one person voting one way instead of another? If these two denominations had merged ten years earlier, what do you think might have been different?

CHAPTER 15

PRELUDE TO MERGER
1963–1968

1. What about the decade of the 1960s may have influenced so many denominations to talk about merging?
2. If today's Wesleyans were to merge with another denomination today (say, The Church of the Nazarene, or the Free Methodist Church), what would be the arguments for and against such mergers? How might these be similar to or different from the discussions in the 1960s about the Wesleyan Methodist-Pilgrim merger?
3. Imagining that you were serving on the committee, what are the plusses and minuses of each possible word as the new name of the church? Pilgrim? Methodist? Holiness? United? Wesleyan? What other names can you think of that you might have suggested?
4. What importance does a denominational name have? How can it help or hinder the mission of a denomination and local church?
5. Why would the Pilgrims have wanted the Wesleyan Methodists to vote first on merger in 1966?
6. How do you think the founding of YES Corps influenced youth ministries (and missions) in the coming generations?
7. The Pilgrims' R. C. Hawkins thought he had an investment that might have funded the general church program forever, but it went bust. Forgetting for now the failure of this investment, what do you think of the *idea*? What are the advantages and disadvantages of a situation in which a denomination with significant investment income would no longer need any support from the local church? How about colleges and universities that would need no support from their sponsoring denomination? Or local churches that would need no financial support from their members and attenders?

8. When the Reformed Baptists of Canada were received into the Wesleyan Methodist Church, they were allowed to maintain a stricter stance on divorce and the mode of baptism than the general church. How does this square with the stance Wesleyan Methodists had taken with their own conservatives earlier? What was different about this situation? Do such exceptions stand forever, or were they ended in 1968 at merger?
9. Since the very conservative segments were generally opposed to the upcoming merger, what role do you think merger plans may have had on the way both denominations dealt with these conservatives in the pre-merger era? If you had been there at the time, what might you have said of the conservatives' leaving? Good riddance? Too bad? Or what else?
10. Can you find evidence on the internet of the mini-denominations and connections that resulted from the pre-merger splits from the Pilgrims and Wesleyan Methodists? *(Research required.)*
11. Examining the two road signs for the two denominations, what do they say about each denomination that is essentially correct? Incorrect?



1. After reading this chapter, make a list of the similarities and differences between the two merging denominations coming into the merger—Pilgrims and Wesleyan Methodists.
2. How old would a person have to be today to have attended and remember the merger ceremony described in this chapter?
3. What were the biggest adjustments Wesleyan Methodists had to make after merger?
4. What were the biggest adjustments Pilgrims had to make after merger?
5. On what issues was there enough compromise that both denominations could keep on doing what each always had, at least for a while?
6. How has the way The Wesleyan Church raises money for education and the general denominational work changed from the plan launched at merger in 1968? How would you change it in the future? *(Some research required.)*
7. Examining the merged denomination's logo and road sign pictured in this chapter, what do you think it communicates about the new denomination? What would you change? How has the actual logo changed today? What do you think the present logo communicates best? *(Some research required.)*

CHAPTER 17

THE SPIRIT OF ANDERSON 1968–1972

1. What do you think was the primary difference (and thus primary contribution) of each stream (Pilgrim and Wesleyan Methodist) to the merged denomination? How do you see these streams today in the denomination?
2. Considering the gavel made from the tree where Micajah McPherson was lynched, can you tell about other examples of traditions or rituals in local churches, districts, or the denomination? How do such rituals function in a group, and what are the advantages and dangers of these kinds of rituals?
3. The first four general superintendents were equally representative of the two former denominations, but what were their regional roots? Discuss the relevance of regional "representation" among denominational leadership. Should denominations attempt some sort of regional parity in their nominations? Gender representation? Racial representation? Church size? Other factors you think nominating committees should keep in mind?
4. The Pilgrims had started with a firm doctrine of the premillennial return of Christ as one of the pillars of the "fourfold gospel." The merged church allowed for a broader interpretation of the end times. What do you think of this approach? Are there other positions of The Wesleyan Church that you think could benefit from this broader approach—allowing for differences among Wesleyans without taking sides in the *Discipline?* If so, find one of these statements and rewrite it as you would prefer it to be worded for this broader stance.
5. Make a list of the changes in things the Wesleyan Methodists and the Pilgrims in local churches went through. Do you think these changes were evenly distributed or out of balance? If Wesleyans today were to merge with the Church of the Nazarene or Free Methodist church, what do you think would be the major issues of change for each?

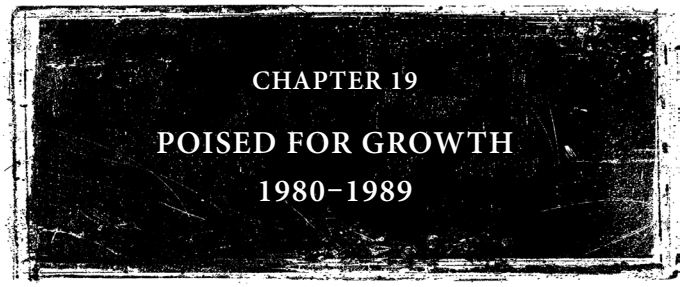
6. Melvin Dieter supervised the closing of most of the Pilgrim Bible colleges and one Wesleyan Methodist college. This reflected a shift for former Pilgrims from getting their ministers from Bible colleges to getting them from the ministerial departments at a liberal arts college. In today's world, what are the downsides of a Bible college approach? Of a liberal arts approach?
7. After losing all but one of their Bible college campuses, the Pilgrim leaders also lost their Indianapolis headquarters site and moved to Marion, relocating into the former Wesleyan Methodist headquarters. It didn't seem to bother most Pilgrims. This lack of deep emotional ties to *place* was typical of many Pilgrims. Where do you think this comes from in a group? Is our current Wesleyan Church more or less tied to denominational "sacred space" today? What are the places most sacred to The Wesleyan Church today? At the general level? District? Local church? To you personally?
8. Compare the general schedule of weekly services of the denomination in 1968 to today's weekly schedule. What is similar? What is different? What do you expect to change in the future—how do you think a church's weekly schedule will appear fifty years from now given the past fifty years of changes?
9. Which do you think would be harder for a local member of a church—losing their headquarters building, their regional college, their district camp meeting grounds, or their local church building in a merger with others? What principles emerge from your answer to these questions?
10. Why did the expected merger with the Free Methodist church collapse? If Wesleyans today considered a merger with Nazarenes or Free Methodists what do you think would be the greatest barrier and could lead to causing collapse of each of these mergers?
11. Like Nazarenes and Free Methodists, Pilgrims did not use the word "inerrancy" in their statement on Scripture. But Wesleyan Methodists added the term in their own statement by the mid 1950s. In merger, the Pilgrims adopted the Wesleyan Methodist term for the merged church's statement. What does this term mean and why was it not used by so many holiness denominations?

CHAPTER 18

A DECADE OF EVANGELISM 1972–1979

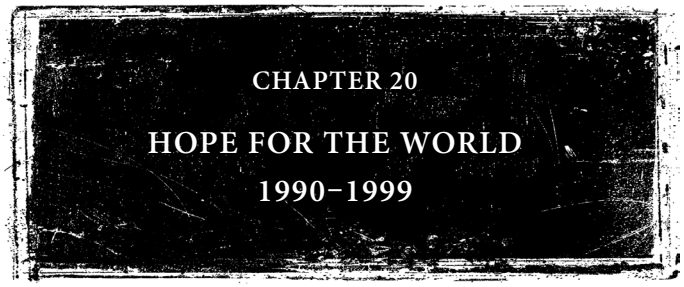
1. Describe what was happening in the larger evangelical culture in the 1970s that led Wesleyans to make evangelism the emphasis in this decade. Do you know anyone who attended one of these events or participated in one of these programs? How did they describe this emphasis on evangelism? *(Some interviewing may be required.)*
2. Trace the role of John Maxwell and his influence on The Wesleyan Church, including the relation between his own emphases and the denomination's. What Wesleyan do you think has the most influence on the denomination today?
3. John Maxwell served as a *pastor*-hero instead of the former heroes who were usually traveling evangelists, missionaries, or denominational officials. How do the "heroes" a denomination lifts up affect people's desire to do what the heroes are doing? Who turns people into "denominational heroes?" How?
4. What role did the youth movement play in the 1970s? Compare that to the role it plays today.
5. In the 1970s, for the first time, Wesleyans had more in worship attendance than in Sunday school. The pattern has continued ever since. When Sunday school and the worship service exchanged places, both of them had to change. How? How would you relate the Sunday evening service and midweek "prayer meeting" to this discussion?
6. How do you think cooperating with Roman Catholics in antiabortion activities affected the Wesleyan view of Catholics? Was this effect a good thing or bad? With whom are we cooperating today on social issues that might affect our views in the future? How?
7. In what ways do you see similarities or differences in how Wesleyans responded to the tongues movement in the 1970s and how Methodists responded to their holiness members at the turn of the century?

8. What was the traditional approach to missions that was overturned by the Wesleyan World Fellowship approach?
9. Given the existence of full general conferences outside North America, what does it now take to change an "essential" like one of the statements in one of our *Articles of Religion*? What would the step by step procedure be? If you were going to change one, which would it be? How would you rewrite it?



1. At the general conference in 1980, the "General Rules" were renamed "Membership Commitments." How do you think this new title affects membership? What would *you* call them?
2. How would you describe the change by the 1984 general conference regarding divorce and remarriage? If you had been present then, how might you argue for *not* changing this provision? How might you argue *for* the change? What issues today do you think are similar to this decision in the 1980s?
3. How did the relocation of the denominational headquarters from small-town Marion to Indianapolis reflect other moods and movements in the 1980s (like the church growth movement or Ronald Reagan's presidency in the USA)? *(Research required.)*
4. The evangelism emphasis of the 1970s morphed into the church growth movement of the 1980s. How would you describe the difference between these two movements?
5. Considering the total statistics of the 1980s (see the appendices in the back of the book), what would you judge was the actual numerical effect of the church growth emphasis for the entire denomination's statistics?
6. Why do you think the denomination persisted in recommending the merger of the youth department into other departments at headquarters in 1972 and then again in 1980?
7. What do you think of each of the two models for church planting—district sponsored planting and local churches planting new churches? Why do you think the strategy started to shift in the 1980s?
8. What were the findings of the urban/ethnic committee in the 1980s, and how would you rate their implementation by the denomination? *(Research required.)*

9. What do you think of the actions of "desegregating" districts by eliminating the all-black "South Ohio district" into surrounding districts?
10. What do you consider to be the lasting contribution of the 1980s church growth movement to The Wesleyan Church?



1. In the 1990s two smaller denominations merged into The Wesleyan Church. What can you find out about them *(research required),* and why do you think the Wesleyans returned after more than 20 years to the practice of joining with other denominations?
2. Trace the various plans for membership The Wesleyan Church has had since merger. Why do denominations have two tiered membership systems? Do you prefer a one-tier system or a two-tier system? What behavior or doctrine would you insist on for a second tier of membership? *(Research required.)*
3. Do you favor membership as a discipling process or as a category only after a person is more fully discipled? What are the advantages and disadvantages of taking a newly saved person directly into membership? What is the difference between membership requirements and leadership requirements?
4. A primary practical issue in the membership debates of the 1990s was the use of alcohol by members. What do *you* think of the membership commitment on total abstinence? In the entire list of membership commitments, which would you make advisory and which would you make required? *(Research required.)*
5. Who won the worship wars? How long did the "win" last? How would you describe "traditional worship" today? Contemporary worship? Blended worship? How long does "contemporary" last?
6. How would you connect the extraordinary growth numbers of Indiana Wesleyan University to the church growth movement of the 1980s or other factors?
7. What were the factors that brought about the closure of United Wesleyan College, the last Pilgrim Bible college? How close was the vote? What were the arguments on both sides? *(Research required.)*

8. In what way was the founding of World Hope a completely different and radical thing for the Wesleyans to do? What do you think has been the long-term effect of this agency on The Wesleyan Church?
9. The Wesleyans were most concerned with evangelism in the 1970s, which morphed into a concern for church growth in the 1980s, then for worship in the 1990s. Looking at the statistics in the back of the book, how do the statistics track with these three foci?

CHAPTER 21

ON MISSION IN A NEW CENTURY

1. It appeared that the first decade in the new millennium after 2000 would be developing local leadership through the LDJ emphasis, but soon the emphasis shifted so that serving and justice became a major thrust of the first decade of the 2000s. What do you think were the factors that made this happen?
2. If you were to list four or five of the biggest concerns of The Wesleyan Church in the 2000s, what would they be? How do these compare with the biggest issues of concern of the founders of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection?
3. What would it take for you to believe that "the Great Reversal" had been reversed? Describe it.
4. How would you connect the serving emphasis to the roots of the Pilgrim church?
5. In the 2000s some denominations continued to reject the ordination of women (like the Roman Catholics and many fundamentalist churches). Others (like the Southern Baptists) backpedaled and withdrew their support for women in ministry, support that was already tentative at best. The Wesleyans reaffirmed their stance along with other holiness churches, the Salvation Army, and many charismatic and mainline churches. Why do you think this issue reemerges from time to time? How do you think it is tied to other social and political issues?
6. If venue planting becomes a major effort in the future, so that some churches have venues in locations hundreds or even thousands of miles away, how would you restructure the district system to provide for this growth? What would you call a "church" with twenty off-site venues, perhaps several out of state? How would that be similar to and different from a *district*?
7. With a shrinking globe, many local churches are getting involved directly in overseas mission, even adopting fields and sending their own missionaries. What are the advantages and dangers of such direct involvement?

8. How have technological innovations changed the way we run a denomination in the last twenty years? What changes can you imagine in the next twenty years?
9. Wesleyans founded their own seminary in 2009. What does this say about the denomination, and how do you anticipate that it will influence the denomination in the future? What do you think of education that is part on-site and part online?
10. How do you think education for undergraduates will change in the coming decades for Wesleyans?
11. How would you rate the transition from generation to generation in The Wesleyan Church in the past? How does one generation hand off leadership to the next? How would you describe the handoff that is happening now? What examples would you give?

APPENDIXES

The following research projects relate to the appendices and are best done by assigning students in a class to study and develop a presentation to others. Since many deal with statistics, the best presentation would illustrate the findings with a graph along with observations or possible contributing factors. After this short presentation, discussion of the presented factors will be interesting.

1. Make a chart of the *number of churches* Wesleyans have had each year since merger. What generalizations would you make? Why?
2. What generalizations would you make concerning the annual number of ministers in The Wesleyan Church since merger after making a chart?
3. Make a chart of the *number of members*—both community and covenant—Wesleyans have had since merger. Develop your findings.
4. Comparing the number of churches to number of members since merger, what do you discover about the *average membership* of a local Wesleyan church?
5. After graphing the comparison of *Sunday school attendance compared to worship attendance* since 1968, offer your observations and possible factors.
6. After graphing the *Sunday evening attendance* since 1968, offer your suggestions for why the graph appears as it does.
7. After graphing the *number of people saved compared to number sanctified* since 1968, what do you discover? Compare the number saved to the number of churches and report the *average saved per church*.
8. Make a graph of the *number of people saved compared to the number baptized* since 1968; then make observations on your findings.

9. Make a graph of the total contributions since 1968 and then compare it with membership and morning attendance numbers to discover the *average giving per member and per attender*.
10. Make a graph of the *ministerial students* since 1968, and offer your discoveries in these statistics. Then compare the *number of ministerial students per number of churches* for the same period, drawing out observations.
11. Make a graph of the l*argest and smallest church attendance of the largest 25 churches* for each decade and make observations from your findings.
12. Total the number of people attending the largest 25 churches for each decade and then compare that to the total membership for the same year. Make a chart showing the *number and percentage of Wesleyans attending the largest 25 churches* for each decade. Make observations and offer your opinion on how long this trend will last.
13. Make a bar graph for the tenures of each general superintendent since 1968 and make observations on their length of service.
14. Examine the list of *general officers* of the church and general board memberships. Make observations from what you see. Who served the longest? Shortest? How many women served? Etc.
15. Using the list of *district superintendents,* make similar observations to the question above on length of service, number of women, mergers between districts, and the like.
16. Examining the list of *college presidents,* make the same kind of observations as above—length of service, gender, etc.
17. After studying the *general conference locations* since 1968, make observations on dates, length, and regional locations.