



The Methodist Connection to Adventism

Adventism's connection to the Wesleyan tradition in America.

by A. Gregory Schneider

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS ARE HEIRS OF THE Wesleyan tradition in America. Ellen White was a Methodist before she was a Millerite. Millerites and Seventh-day Adventists, furthermore, came into being at a time when John Wesley's American Methodist movement so dominated American Protestantism that the time period has come to be known as "the Methodist Age" in American church history.¹ No antebellum Protestant movement in America escaped Methodist influence. The exact nature of Methodist influence on Adventism and the concrete historical connections by which it was exerted have not been much researched. What follows does not trace firm lines of historical causation, then, but only notes similarities between Methodism and Adventism.²

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Formal Organization

One of the most obvious similarities is hierarchy. They had (and have) bishops and conferences; we have presidents and conferences. "Bishop" might suggest an all-too-high view of the church and its officials to Adventists leery of papist influence. The history of Methodism should lay most such suspicions to rest, however. The early Methodists did not have much regard for claims of either Roman Catholics or Anglicans to sacerdotal forms of authority like apostolic succession. John Wesley, in fact, acted directly contrary to Anglican tradition and policy in ordaining the first Methodist missionaries to the American colonies without himself having apostolic authority. American Methodist preachers thereafter generally shrugged off Anglican or Episcopalian reproaches about their lack of apostolic succession.

The early Methodist view of the church prefigured what would become the effective Adventist view, whatever our doctrinal state-

ments may say. Church forms and structures in both traditions exist for pragmatic, instrumental purposes, not because they conform to precedents either of Scripture or of tradition. Indeed, a breezy, popular account of American Methodist history captured a basic element in the spirit of Methodism in its title: "Organizing to Beat the Devil." The point of the church was to spread the gospel, save sinners, and thus beat the devil. Whatever means was effective in serving that goal was likely to meet with the early Methodists' approval. Thus they created what, from today's perspective, might be called a prototype of the traveling sales corporation. In their eyes, however, it had the form of prophetic inspiration, specifically the form of Ezekiel's vision of wheels within wheels:

The *great iron wheel* in the system is *itineracy* [sic], and truly it grinds some of us most tremendously; the *brazen wheel*, attached and kept in motion by the former, is the *local ministry*; the *silver wheel*, the *class leaders*; the *golden wheel*, the *doctrine and discipline of the church*, in full and successful operation. . . . Let us carefully note the admirable and astounding movements of this wonderful machine. You will perceive there are "wheels within wheels." First, there is the great outer wheel of episcopacy, which accomplishes its entire revolution *once in four years*. To this there are attached *twenty-eight smaller wheels*, styled *annual conferences*, moving round *once a year*; to these are attached *one hundred wheels*, designated *presiding elders*, moving *twelve hundred other wheels*, termed *quarterly conferences*, every *three months*; to these are attached *four thousand wheels*, styled *travelling preachers*, moving round *once a month*, and communicating motion to *thirty thousand wheels*, called *class leaders*, moving round *once a week*, and who, in turn, being attached to between *seven and eight hundred thousand wheels*, called *members*, give a sufficient impulse to whirl them round *every day*. O, sir, what a machine is this! This is the machine of which Archimedes only dreamed; this is the machine destined, under God, to *move the world, to turn it upside down!*³

To denizens of the late 20th century, too well acquainted with the frustrations of bu-

reaucocracy, Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones might seem a more appropriate trope for such an organization. But in the half century after the close of the American Revolutionary War, when Methodism was indeed turning parts of the nation upside down, bureaucracy was not yet threatening to turn the Holy Spirit into a ghost in the machine.

Experimental Religion

It was, after all, a salvation machine. It existed for the purpose of getting more and more people to experience a particular crisis of thought and feeling, a crisis called conversion, or the new birth. The early Methodist word for the whole process leading to conversion was "experimental religion," a phrase found occasionally also in the writings of Ellen White.⁴ Methodism was very much a religion of the heart. Millerism and early Seventh-day Adventism were also religions of the heart. Their carefully calculated prophetic schemes and doctrinal distinctives were important largely because of their power to move people into heartfelt religious experience and fellowship. So heartfelt, indeed, that early Advent believers' emotional demonstrations in their meetings earned them a reputation for disorderly conduct and fanaticism.⁵ In similar manner, American Methodists a few decades earlier had wept and shouted together and earned epithets like "shouting Methodist."

The weeping and shouting were inherent in the stages by which believers came to conversion. Every human being, according to general evangelical Christian understandings, was dead in trespasses and sins and thus bound for eternal death. This pre-religious state was characterized by spiritual dullness and disinterest in religious topics or activities. The grace of God, however, moved on all human hearts to awaken them to their dying condition. John Wesley's term for this grace was "prevenient"

or “preventing” grace.⁶ Such grace, in the first stage of experimental religion, created a restless dissatisfaction with one’s current way of life and a quest for deeper knowledge of the gospel that would change the heart. This stage was called “awakening.”

Awakening deepened into “conviction” as the quest continued. Wesley’s rules stated that there was only one condition required for joining the Methodist societies: “a desire to flee the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.”⁷ New members were officially on probation, however, and expected to demonstrate their desire to be saved by keeping the societies’ rules. Such rules included giving up worldly practices like dancing, card-playing, and drinking “spiritous liquors.” They also required spiritual practices like private and family prayer, reading Scripture, attending preaching, prayer meeting, and other “exercises.” The church held, said one commentator on its rules, that those who were not

Adapted from a detail of Alexander Rider’s “The Campmeeting”



converted when they joined the society would soon come to the blessing as they walked in the way of obedience. In a canny understanding of human social psychology, the early Methodists saw that required actions often lead to desired feelings.

Indeed, Methodist probationers usually found that trying to act like a Christian convinced them that they were possessed of the carnal mind that was at enmity with God, that their strivings “in the flesh” could not please Him (Romans 8:7, 8). The rebelliousness they felt as they strove to keep the requirements of the societies, and their failures, made them *feel* the truth they had been taught about being guilty of sin, polluted by it, and therefore justly condemned by God. Being convicted of one’s sins naturally caused sorrow and mourning over these sins, and terror at the prospect of being lost forever. Kentucky frontier settler Jacob Young could no longer speak when he was convicted of his sins. He wept uncontrollably and fell to the floor. He regained some of his strength and then wandered for hours alone in the woods, “moaning like a dove that had lost his mate.”⁸

Such despair was but the darkness before morning, however. The normative pattern of experimental religion was captured perfectly by the psalmist:

“For his anger endureth but a moment,
in his favour is life;
weeping may endure for a night,
but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5, KJV).

For Jacob Young the joy of the morning came at about midnight. It was then that “God, in mercy, lifted up the light of his countenance upon me, and I was translated from the power of darkness into the Kingdom of God’s dear son, and rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”⁹ This was “conversion,” the stage of experimental religion in which prevenient grace transmuted into justifying and converting grace. The sorrow, despair, and terror of

conviction, by their very intensity, cried out for a transformation into an opposite condition where an ecstasy of joy led to peace, hope, and grateful love. Metaphors of depths leading to heights, heaviness to lightness, and especially darkness to light pervade believers' accounts of their religious experience. Jacob Young rose early after his nighttime conversion and climbed up to a "high eminence," where he faced east: "The morning was cold, clear, and beautifully bright . . . the earth and heavens appeared new—reminding me of the 'new heavens and new earth' wherein dwelleth righteousness."¹⁰

Young's despair had never been unalloyed by hope. His Christian friends had prayed for him and with him all through his crisis. The Bible was full of promises of God's mercy and love and, most important, testified to the crucified and risen Christ who made it possible to escape condemnation and be adopted as a child of God. All this became reality by the exercise of faith, an action of the heart that claimed the promises of God and the grace of Christ for the individual who exercised it. Faith enabled believers to see, feel, and know that their guilt was removed, that they were pardoned rather than condemned, and that their pollution was cleansed sufficiently to avoid eternal death. A whole new set of affections took possession of heart and soul. Most significant and distinctive for Methodists was the description in Romans 8:16 of the feeling of being adopted as God's child: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Dubbed the "witness of the Spirit," this persisting sense of God's adoption was what believers referred to when they spoke of getting, retaining, or, sometimes, losing the "comforts of religion."

Retaining the comforts of religion in this sense, however, was never sufficient for devout Methodists. They eagerly heeded John Wesley's call to "go on to perfection." The

grace that brought the sinner from awakening through conviction and conversion continued to work upon the believer to bring him or her to sanctification. Sanctification cleansed the soul of such impure motives as pride, vanity, envy, anger, and lust. It also so filled the believer with love that he or she was enabled to love God with the whole heart. This was what Wesley meant by perfection. It was a distinctive doctrine and experience for the early Methodists. Usually a long process of spiritual struggle led up to it, just as an awakened sinner went through a process of seeking before the crisis of conversion. The experience of perfect love was, however, a discrete moment in religious experience that resembled conversion in structure and even in intensity.

Thus an anonymous contributor to a Methodist weekly paper recounted how she "contended hard and long" for the right degree of faith that would enable her to maintain the "resignation, meekness, fortitude, and patience" required by a full Christian experience. Her persevering prayer, however, issued only

Adapted from "The Circuit Preacher," an illustration from the cover of *Harper's Weekly*, October 12, 1867



in a desolate sense that God was hiding his face from her, and rightly so, she felt. She then resolved to wait patiently until God restored “the joys of His salvation.” This was the turning point. She felt a change of mind in which the impulses of her fallen nature seemed to have fled. A peace possessed her soul, a peace that deepened for two weeks and culminated in a season of communion with God. “Solemn awe and humble love” filled her whole soul, and “the Spirit and the Word” showed her that the blood of Christ had cleansed her from all unrighteousness. Her spirit soared “as on eagle’s wings.”¹¹

This kind of sanctification experience accented right feeling and motive more than right performance. To be sure, Methodists sought perfection not merely for the ecstasy of the experience, but also because it made them more useful in God’s service. They did not, however, use very much of the language that suggested a capacity to keep perfectly the law of God. This more law-and-performance version of perfectionism may be seen

as the New England or Puritan translation of Wesleyan influence, a translation made widely influential by Presbyterian revivalist Charles G. Finney and his followers. Seventh-day Adventism seems to have followed Finney’s lead and thus filtered Wesleyan influence through its Yankee inclinations. In any case, it seems to me that the early writings of Ellen White and later devotional writings like *Steps to Christ* clearly reflect the structure and sensibilities of experimental religion as promoted by early American Methodists.

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More broadly, the experimental religion so widely popularized by Methodist evangelism is the root of our contemporary insistence that Christianity is essentially a “personal relationship with Jesus.” As devoted as Adventism has been to correct doctrine and right behavior, it has also always had the seeds of a pietist devotionism that insists everyone must know God as his or her own present and precious Saviour. Every generation of young Adventists, it seems, “discovers” that religion is not primarily law and doctrine but rather a “relationship,” and every generation imagines that they are the first in a long time to come to this realization. But

from at least the time that John Wesley felt his heart “strangely warmed” in 18th-century England, the idea of a personal relationship with God has been available to ever-widening circles of Anglo-American Protestants. Adventism is but one movement that has appropriated the idea and taught, or driven, its members to pursue the reality.

Pervading and driving the entire process of experimental religion was a psychological and spiritual pattern that may have eluded many an Adventist who has sought a Christian experience by following Mrs. White’s Wesleyan lead. I have dubbed this pattern “the way of the cross” in my work on American Methodism. It was a tenacious disposition to expect affliction to yield comfort, sorrow to bring joy, pain to lead to spiritual pleasure, depression to give way to exultation, and discouragement to rebound in renewed courage. “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the

morning." The affliction, pain, depression, and discouragement were all qualities of the natural self. The joy always belonged to the new self in Christ. The way of the cross was a lifelong process of dying to self and living in Christ. "Strange as it is, it is very true," marveled one early believer, "the lower we sink, the higher we rise."¹²

So tenacious was this disposition to rise high upon sinking low that it could lead to some bizarre results. Renowned Ohio preacher James B. Finley, for instance, wrote to his brother John of some personal distress. In a return letter John acknowledged his brother's trying circumstances, but then reported how his thoughts turned to their Saviour's trials on earth and the promise that God will always provide. Contemplation of the Saviour who had no place to lay his head soon led John to burst into a flood of tears because he was "filled with that love which melts the heart and sweetens all the sorrows of life." A visiting neighbor caught the spirit of John's sweet sorrow and the two of them together "had a glorious time of praising a precious bleeding Saviour."¹³ Surviving records do not inform us how James felt about his tale of woe being the occasion for his brother's "glorious time."

The Methods

Methodism taught people to act and feel the way of the cross through the methods of revivalism. The early 19th-century camp meeting, for instance, was a Methodist distinctive. The faithful from a wide region would gather to carve a holy campground out of a woods or meadow, pitching their tents around an enclosure for meetings. Morning and evening the preachers sought to proclaim the truths of experimental religion in a manner that would stir up the feelings of the congregation and create a collective contagion for salvation. Every service included a call to

those awakened or convicted through the preaching to come forward and kneel in an enclosure in front of the preachers' stand. There they would pray for salvation and be prayed for by those already converted, often members of their families or close friends.

Circuit preachers held these "altar calls" in churches too, when churches were available. Sometimes there would be only a cabin or general-purpose meetinghouse with benches. The preachers would still issue the call and set out a bench or two at the front. These benches became known as the "mourners' bench" because those convicted of their sins but not yet converted would sit on them and mourn over their sins and their lost condition. In all these settings, social pressure and emotional contagion worked powerfully to induce the appropriate feelings and actions in those attending.

These meetings worked, however, because their social and emotional dynamics were woven into the ongoing life of the congregations that hosted the camp meetings and preaching services. Every member of a Methodist "society" as the early congregations were called, was expected to attend "class-meeting" weekly. Persistent non-attendance was grounds from expulsion. Class-meetings were smaller groups, ideally of 12, usually two or three times that number, that met to keep one another accountable to the rules of the society and to share religious experience. Each class had a leader, appointed by the circuit preacher, who was expected at every meeting to inquire into each member's keeping of the rules and into the experience of God working in the members' lives.

The questioning could be uncomfortably close and personal. Indeed, published guidelines for class leaders encouraged it to be so. Suggested questions about outward matters asked whether members drank or gambled, whether they prayed in secret or in their families. Questions about inward matters asked

how members had sinned or been tempted, whether they felt forgiveness of their sins, whether they had the witness of the Spirit or not, or whether they desired to be told of their faults.¹⁴

The point of these exercises was to unify the believers around the motives, feelings, and actions of experimental religion. They were designed also to exclude all motives from individual hearts and all persons from their corporate fellowship that would interfere with following the way of the cross. The meetings were closed to all non-members except those "interested persons" who had not experi-

enced them before. Those who could not adjust to these methods usually excluded themselves. A tale told by some southern Methodists depicted an "interested person" who stayed to experience his first class-meeting in a very crowded cabin. As the inquiry progressed from person to person, the visitor became visibly agitated and rose to leave. The way

to the door was blocked by the crowd, however, so he repaired to the hearth and scrambled up the chimney onto the roof. Hatless and sooty, he leaped down to his horse, galloped for home, and burst breathless into his house. His startled wife asked if Indians were chasing him. "Worse than Indians!" he replied.¹⁵

It is, perhaps, easier for the modern reader to understand how such exercises excluded people than it is to see how they unified them. But the class-meeting became the occasion for intense and powerful fellowship as members shared the joys and sorrows of their religious strivings. Members learned how to testify to

the workings of God in their hearts and these testimonies became powerful means of propagating the gospel of experimental religion. Testimony confirmed believers in the way of the cross and induced in their unconverted hearers the emotional patterns of the way.

Indeed, the policy of meeting behind closed doors attracted a good deal of curiosity. It was an age when modern norms of privacy were not well established and people did not feel compelled, when confronted with novelties happening in private homes, to mind their own business. Methodist laity capitalized on the curiosity by holding prayer meetings and

preaching services and inviting the seekers of social novelty to attend. At the end of these public services, they asked all non-members to leave while they held their class-meetings. The weeping and shouting and praising the Lord that then went on inside often moved those outside to want in. Thus one Benjamin Webb, who later became a circuit preacher, experienced conviction

of sin while lingering outside on the porch of house from which he and his friends had been excluded while the believers held their class. He and his friends cried out for mercy so loudly that the class leader opened the doors. Four of them joined the church that night.¹⁶

Class-meetings were also the seedbed for circuit preachers. In the early years of Methodism veteran preachers picked promising young men who could testify powerfully and move their hearers in class-meeting. Novice preachers were told that if they froze and forgot their sermon outlines, they should just

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tell their experience. A good story of personal religious experience was the essence of Methodism's appeal and its most commonly used device for spiritual formation.

This preference for the good story is another instance of the pragmatic bent Methodism shares with Adventism. It has as its corollary a certain disdain for intellectual rigor and for the pursuit of truth for its own sake apart from its personal impact or application. Peter Cartwright, the most renowned, if not the most typical of Methodist circuit-riders in the Ohio Valley, illustrated these attitudes in a tale he told of "a fresh, green, live Yankee" preacher with a diploma from back East. This educated young man, probably a Presbyterian or Congregationalist, looked down on frontier Methodist preachers like Cartwright who got their training mostly on the job. Nevertheless, or perhaps because of this supercilious attitude, Cartwright invited the Yankee to preach one night in a large frame building that was unplastered. The wind blew; the candles flared and gave bad light. The young preacher, unskilled with the extemporaneous preaching style of the frontier, had an awkward time reading his prepared manuscript. After about half an hour, observed Cartwright, "the great blessing came: he closed." Cartwright rescued the situation by delivering a strong exhortation in the style the congregation was accustomed to. He set out a mourners' bench and invited people to come, which they did in large numbers. One mourner was a large 230-pound man who was crying aloud for mercy, making a noise as big as himself. The young preacher, physically a slight man, tapped the large mourner on the shoulder and said, "Be composed, be composed."

Cartwright, exasperated that the little Yankee had not learned a lesson from his sermon's failure, crowded his way to the convicted man and shouted, "Pray on, brother; pray on, brother; there's no composure in hell or dam-

nation."

Again the little preacher soothed, "Be composed; be composed, brother."

Again Cartwright shouted, "Pray on, brother; pray on, brother; there is no composure in hell."

Then he turned to some other people crowding about and asked them to clear a way, intending to get this mourner away from the educated little preacher who understood so little. Just as Cartwright turned, however, the big mourner shouted, "Glory to God!" The Lord had converted him and spoken peace to his soul. In an ecstasy of joy he reached out to take Cartwright in his arms. Two men were in the way, however, so the big new convert wheeled around and swept the little Yankee preacher off his feet, up high into the air. Then he jumped from bench to bench, knocking people right and left as he heedlessly celebrated his deliverance. The little preacher apparently wished a deliverance of a different sort. Arms and legs splayed wide, he appeared to Cartwright to be expecting his neck to be broken any moment. "O! how I desired to be near this preacher at that moment," laughed Cartwright, "and tap him on the shoulder, and say, 'Be composed; be composed, brother!'"

The Cultural Archetype: Haven in a Heartless World

Methodism grew in numbers, wealth, institutions, and respectability even as the nation grew. So did Adventism. In both denominations a certain ambivalence has grown up about the revivalism and enthusiastic emotional religion that characterized their beginnings. Many Adventist readers may recognize some of the methods of Methodism in their memories of evangelistic campaigns or weeks of prayer they have experienced in church or school. And many may remember those expe-

riences with distaste for the manipulation of emotion, the public pressures to conform, and the emotional letdown and backlash after the “revival” was over. Some may be tempted to conclude that this style of religion accomplished little and has, for educated people at least, ended up in the dustbin of history where it belongs. The religion of the heart, of the personal relationship with God is more popular, as I have suggested above. But the personal relationship is not so easily separated from the revivalistic methods. The spread of the “celebration” worship style, with its carefully engineered and staged “spontaneity” of emotion is one bit of evidence that personal piety and corporate worship in Adventism are still under the sway of revivalistic tradition.

Methodism, historically, was the major carrier and systematizer of that tradition. Through the Methodists many Protestant groups, Adventists among them, have partaken of a basic way of organizing experience. Stated in the abstract, this way of seeing and ordering the world postulates an inner circle of love, power, and purity that is the center of everything that is most valuable. This inner circle is set apart from hostile and polluting forces that surround it and threaten to overwhelm it. Nevertheless, the inner circle generates within itself the power to withstand and overcome the hostile forces. The shape of this abstract cultural archetype may be seen in the Methodist and, with variations, the Adventist visions of the church, the self, and the family.

The class-meeting, for instance, was deliberately designed to make participants see and feel the difference between the family of God on the inside and the world outside. People unawakened to vital religion were excluded because, said the early Methodist bishops, they would dampen if not entirely destroy “that *liberty of speech*” that made the meetings such a blessing to sincere believers and seekers of salvation.¹⁷ James B. Finley put the

matter tactlessly when he moved to correct members on one of his circuits who were letting anyone into their class-meetings. Reform your ways, he told them, Methodists ought not to give that which is holy to dogs, nor cast their pearls before swine.¹⁸

Those excluded often evinced their swinelike nature. The sources are full of accounts of “rowdies” or “roughs” of one kind or another attempting to break in and break up class-meetings, camp meetings, or other religious services. They generally failed, in the stories told by the Methodists, and often they were conquered by the very religious spirit they attempted to disrupt.

That was the fate of a whisky distiller who attempted to break up a class-meeting. When he led a gang to where the believers were meeting, he managed to break in, but a sentry inside the door quickly shut out the rest of the gang. The believers and mourners had been shouting and weeping in high excitement, and the distiller suddenly found himself very much out of his element. He became an island of reprobacy in a billowing sea of devotion. The spiritual contagion overcame him, and he fell to the floor in conviction. The sentry shouted the news to gang milling about outside and they rushed to see, many falling upon one another in the doorway, some, presumably, under conviction as well as under the weight of their comrades. The rest “ran to their horses and fled with the greatest precipitancy and consternation to their homes.”¹⁹ The spirit of Methodism’s inner sacred space had once again not only kept the world at bay, but had conquered and scattered the worldlings.

This outer battle was but a reflection of the more important inner battle that every believer fought. Every day a Christian took up the cross, yielding the worldly motives of anger, pride, and lust and undergoing crucifixion with Christ. When Ellen White wrote that every advance step heavenward must be taken by an earnest and heartbreaking confession

and repentance of sin, she reflected this understanding.²⁰ The psychological result of following the way was a configuration of motives that made the soul and its struggles a microcosm of the religious community set over against the world. The personal relationship with Jesus meant an inner sanctum of sacred affection set on God and on heavenly things. This spiritual center was beset by the remaining sinful nature of the believer, however, with all its readiness to respond to the world, the flesh, and the devil. The quest for entire sanctification was a quest to so realize the love of God within that it would cleanse the soul from all sin, leaving only a inner sphere of purity, peace, and power to do God's will.

Adventism, too, has customarily separated itself from the world and done battle with it. Indeed, Adventists expect that time will end with the world threatening to annihilate the church. Adventists also struggle to attain the inner peace and purity of sanctification. But the differences in eschatology between the two traditions imply differences in the relationship they envision between their outer and inner struggles. Methodists sought sanctification in order to be empowered for more effective work in converting the world to God. They were not, at first, very concerned about the millennium, but when they thought about it they expected it would be ushered in by God working through human instrumentalities in the course of history. Hence the importance of more and more be-

lievers attaining sanctification. The more perfected souls there were, the sooner God would be able, through their labor, to make the kingdoms of this world His own and thus usher in the Second Coming and final reign of Christ at the end of the millennium.

In contrast to this post-millennial vision, Adventists have sought the perfection of their souls in order only to make ultimately stark the contrast between the church and the world. Christ will come, says one version of Adventist theology, when the character of Christ is perfectly reflected in his advent people. At that time also, of course, the world will be cleansed by God's supernatural intervention. In both cases the spiritual and moral perfection of the individual is linked to the purification of the cosmos, but the type of link is very different in each.

Neither tradition has seen the millennium come, but each has labored to see that its version of the truth is passed from generation to generation. Hence a concern with family life. The early Methodists experienced warm and intense fellowship in religious exercises like class-meetings. Their forms of religious fellowship became models for their family

Adapted from Alexander Rider's "The Campmeeting"



lives. At the dawn of American independence, when American Methodists were just getting started, family still meant primarily the sovereignty of a patriarch over the woman, children, and servants living on his land, in his household. By the 1840s, when Methodism had become America's largest denomination, most Americans agreed that sentiment defined the family, that it was a sacred circle of affection set apart from the world. The home was a haven in a heartless world, much as the church had been a refuge against the world.

However, as the church had also been an engine of spiritual power for overcoming the world, so the home was the crucible of virtuous character that would put down the world's vice and degeneracy. Indeed, in many minds, the

home became the center of a spirituality of the new American republic, the foundation of the morality that would allow the nation to fulfill a divinely appointed destiny to reform the whole world by its democratic example.²¹ The religious practices of Methodism, as I have argued at length elsewhere, laid the foundations in American culture for the adoption of this now commonplace vision of the family.²²

The writings of Ellen White on the home seem to me to abound in themes like those discussed above, leaving aside, of course, the exaggerated millennial hope for the nation. It is likely she and her readers learned to see family life in this manner in and through the revivalistic ethos shaped by American Methodism.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Winthrop S. Hudson, "The Methodist Age in America," *Methodist History* 12 (April 1974), pp. 4-15.

2. Further caveats: The Methodism described here is early American Methodism, not the diverse and liberalized Methodism found today in the United Methodist Church. The sources for the description, furthermore, come largely from Southern border states and the Ohio Valley region rather than New England and western New York, where Adventism first thrived. The Chesapeake region was the cradle of Methodism in America from which it spread to the entire nation. See Russell E. Richey, *Early American Methodism* (Bloomington, In.: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 47-64; and my *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington, In.: Indiana University Press, 1993).

3. George G. Cookman, *Speeches Delivered on Various Occasions*, quoted in Russell E. Richey, "The Social Sources of Denominationalism: Methodism," in *Denominationalism*, Russell E. Richey, ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1977), p. 163.

4. See, for instance, Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1948), Vol. 1, p. 504; Vol. 2, p. 431; Vol. 5, pp. 221, 619.

5. See, for instance, David L. Rowe, *Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850*, AAR Studies in Religion No. 38 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985) and Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, eds., *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the 19th*

Century, 2nd. ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), especially Appendix 2.

6. Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley*, Library of Protestant Thought (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 33, 273. Wesley's idea of grace was, of course, much different from the Calvinist notions of limited atonement and double divine predestination that were inherent in America's dominant forms of Protestantism at the time.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

8. Jacob Young, *Autobiography of a Pioneer: or the Nativity, Experience, Travels, and Ministerial Labors of Rev. Jacob Young, With Incidents, Observations, and Reflections* (Cincinnati: Swormstedt and Poe, 1857), pp. 38-42.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 43.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

11. "Christian Holiness," (Cincinnati) *Western Christian Advocate* (March 27, 1840), p. 196.

12. James Henthorn to Daniel Hitt, Oct. 3, 1797, Daniel Hitt Letters, Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio.

13. John P. Finley to James B. Finley, December 15, 1811, James B. Finley Letters, Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio.

14. Robert Emory, *History of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: G. Lane and C. B. Tippet, 1845), pp. 184, 185.

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