

LIBERTY AND LOYALTY IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: A GLOBAL HISTORY APPROACH

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This paper was presented at the 8th Australasian Centre for Wesleyan Research Conference in Wellington, New Zealand, 2-3 October 2017.

'Global history' focuses on the cultural and social features of international relations. Themes covered by global history in its attempt to connect the 'local' with the 'global' have included race relations, colonisation, economic forces, migration, and human rights. Religion is an area of study that lends itself well to a global history approach because religious movements always depend upon transnational networks of piety for their spread and consolidation. W.R. Ward claimed that 'the first great Protestant awakenings arose from an interweaving of pietism, revivalism, and politics.' John Wesley's political writings reflect on the impact of Britain's global conflicts and provide insights into the political responses of the broader religious world of the eighteenth century. The notion of 'liberty' was a significant theme in the mentalities that dominated the Atlantic world of the long eighteenth century (1688-1815) and this paper will investigate the two overarching themes of 'liberty' and 'loyalty' that dominate Wesley's political thought in order to provide insights into the political responses of the broader religious world of that period.

Introduction

This paper seeks to situate John Wesley's political writings historically more than theologically, taking a 'transnational' or 'global history' approach.¹ This differs from 'international history' approaches which tend to deal with the history of diplomatic relations between countries (foreign policy), and focuses instead on the cultural and social features of international relations.² According to Olstein, global history 'adopts the interconnected world created by the process of globalization as its larger unit of analysis, providing the ultimate context for the analysis of any historical entity, phenomenon, or process.'³ Themes covered by global history in its attempt to connect the 'local' with the 'global' have included race relations, colonisation, economic forces, migration, and human rights. A good example is Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds' *Drawing the Global Colour Line* which examined the 'White Australia' policy in the context of other race-based immigration policies showing that Australia's approach was not greatly different from other countries in the British dominions.⁴ This article is a broad overview of themes in a monograph I am currently working on with the provisional title of *John Wesley's Political World*. It draws on material in the introductory and concluding sections of the book in order to highlight a number of conclusions, and therefore does not deal closely with the close examination of texts as the larger work does.

I. Britain in the Long Eighteenth Century

It was during the long eighteenth century (1688-1815) that Britain became a great European power. This came through a combination of its participation in global wars, the creation of a modern financial system (the Bank of London was founded in 1694), industrial innovation and growth, and a series of monarchs (especially in the case of George III) who insisted on taking an active role in foreign affairs in partnership with Parliament. The major global conflicts of the century have been called collectively 'the

¹ Though chapters 2-5 of Ted Weber's *Politics in the Order of Salvation*, offer a valuable historical treatment, his approach is that of the theological ethicist not the historian. He is 'interested more in the theological and moral reasoning – present, absent, or implied – in Wesley's political thought than in the details and impact of his political history.' T.H. Weber, *Politics in the Order of Salvation: Transforming Wesleyan Political Ethics* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2001), 13–14.

² A. Iriye, *Global and Transnational History: The Past, Present and Future* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); B. Mazlish, and R. Bultjens, eds. *Conceptualizing Global History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993). *The Journal of Global History* was established in 2006 and is published by Cambridge University Press. Its first issue included a programmatic essay by P.K. O'Brien, 'Historiographical Traditions and Modern Imperatives for the Restoration of Global History,' *Journal of Global History* 1 (2006): 3–40. Whether or not 'global history' should be distinguished from 'world history' is a contested question. A helpful introduction to the latter is P. Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

³ D. Olstein, *Thinking History Globally* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 24.

⁴ M. Lake and H. Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Second Hundred Year's War' and included the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13), The Anglo-Spanish War/War of the Austrian Succession (1740-8), the Seven Years' War (1756-63), the War of American Independence (1775-83), and the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France (1793-1815). All of this preparation and demobilization from one war to the next was an expensive business but it transformed Britain's geopolitical position from a rather backward and provincial kingdom perched on the edge of Europe to a leading global power.

The American Revolution (1775-83), upon which Wesley commented extensively, is now usually studied as a global war, but one phase of Britain's war with France, as well as America's first civil war, fought between fellow Britons. The French entered the war in 1778 on the side of the colonists, followed by Spain in 1779. After the loss of the American colonies Britain signed a Triple Alliance with the Dutch and the Prussians heralding an end to a period of isolationist politics and bringing it back into a European orbit. News of the French Revolution beginning in 1789 was at first received with little alarm, since the descent of the French state into a weakness brought on by internal chaos only seemed to fulfil a long-held British desire to see France finally disempowered. However, by 1793 with the radicals executing Louis XVI, and William Pitt the Younger concerned to defend the Netherlands against French aggression, Britain was ready once again to enter the fray against its traditional enemy. This time, however, its role in continental warfare would be seen by other European powers as a more central and decisive one. Lord Grenville conceived a 'Grand Alliance' in 1798 which made subsidies and loans available to allied states in exchange for resistance to France. By 1807 this alliance was eclipsed by a Europe dominated by Napoleon's imperial ambitions. The final defeat of France in 1814-15 only came after Britain committed astonishing amounts of money, supplies, and troops to support its allies, some of them new allies such as the Spanish who resisted Napoleon on the Iberian Peninsula in 1808. The cost was high, but it had brought Britain squarely into the European sphere where it was influential in brokering a peace at the Congress of Vienna (1814-15) that followed the outline of its own foreign policy interests. At the end of the long eighteenth-century Britain had now reached a high point in its rise to greatness as a European power which would only accelerate into the nineteenth century.

II. Global Evangelicalism

Religion is an area of study that lends itself well to a global history approach because religious movements always depend upon transnational networks of piety for their spread and consolidation. W.R. Ward claimed that 'the first great Protestant awakenings arose from an interweaving of pietism, revivalism, and politics.'⁵ Wesley's political writings reflect on the impact of global conflicts on Britain itself and can provide insights into the political responses of the broader religious world of the eighteenth century. There is a clear trend in the study of the origins of Evangelicalism to stress its international dimensions. Britain and America were by no means isolated from the events in central Europe that gave rise to new religious minorities which were focused on personal spiritual renewal, partly as a means of resisting absorption by church and state. As David Hempton observed, 'Religious identities in the British Isles are not as hermetically sealed as they first appear' and it is in the 'tangled web of circulating literature, itinerant revivalists and folk migrations' of the displaced and persecuted minorities of Habsburg-dominated central Europe that the international shape of the great awakening is to be found.⁶ Similarly, W.R. Ward insisted that eighteenth-century revivalism 'can only be understood in the widest possible area 'between the Russian and American frontiers of the European world.'⁷ That is a very large amount of territory indeed. If, 'Evangelicalism' as Ward maintained is simply Anglo-Saxon parlance for 'Pietism,' then Methodism, emerging as it did largely as a result of such international networks of piety, cannot be understood apart from this global context.⁸

⁵ W.R. Ward, 'Evangelical Awakenings in the North Atlantic World,' in *Cambridge History of Christianity, vol. VII Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660-1815*, eds. Stewart J. Brown and Timothy Tackett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 7: 329 (329-47).

⁶ D. Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 151.

⁷ W.R. Ward, 'Power and Piety: The Origins of Religious Revival in the Early Eighteenth Century,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 63, no. 1 (1980): 231-53, cited in D. Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984). Hempton has noted elsewhere how it became clear to him that 'any account of Methodism that failed to take into account its international dimensions was by definition incomplete, perhaps even dangerous.' D. Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 5.

⁸ W.R. Ward 'Evangelical Awakenings in the North Atlantic World,' in *Cambridge History of Christianity, VII*: 330. The classic work on the European origins of the Evangelical Awakening is Ward's masterful treatment in *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

There has been a tendency in the historical writing on revivals to use the term ‘great awakening’ for the American context and ‘evangelical revival’ for the British context but the use of separate nomenclature has a tendency to obscure the international nature of the movement. The term ‘transatlantic’ also has its limitations because it refers to Britain on the one side of the oceanic divide and America on the other. The global dimensions of religious revival make the story more complex than that. While Britain and America were overwhelmingly Anglo and Anglo-Celtic in the eighteenth century both were also sites of significant non-Anglo people and cultures. Lutherans were expelled from the Catholic diocese of Salzburg in 1731 and Wesley met and was inspired by them in Georgia. Huguenots had been displaced from the German Palatinate during the War of the Spanish Succession; Anglican Evangelicals from Huguenot backgrounds included William Romaine and Charles Edward de Coetlogon. Both Vincent Perronet and John Fletcher, Anglicans who supported Methodism, were Swiss Protestants.⁹ The rise of Methodism is inexplicable without reference to European diaspora populations in Britain and America including Moravians, Palatines, Huguenots, and Swedes. Wesley was connected to the leaders of these movements and his contacts open up insights into the complex web of international networks that created the Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century.¹⁰

Taking a ‘long eighteenth century’ view enables us to see the early nineteenth century missionary expansion into the Southern World as filling out the story of the global religious revival of this period even further.¹¹ Wesley carefully examined life and conditions in West Africa in his *Thoughts upon Slavery*, an investigation driven by his polemic against the slave trade. He showed surprisingly little interest, however, in the Pacific voyages of James Cook whose account of Tahiti he could barely credit as believable.¹² In spite of such incredulity on Wesley’s part, Cook’s journeys would open up new vistas of Methodist expansion in the succeeding century. Methodist religion did not merely have a ‘transatlantic’ or even European dimension; it had a truly global reach.

III. John Wesley’s Political World

John Wesley’s political world was a global one since British politics in the long eighteenth century were entangled in Britain’s development as an imperial power. From a rather backward country far from the centre of European power in the seventeenth century England had become ‘Britain’ and Britain had become ‘Great.’ It is impossible to separate religious vitality from this greatness, since the eighteenth century was an era of religious renewal movements of which Methodism, even if the most conspicuous, was very far from the only participant. In spite of frequently claiming that politics was not the business of preachers, Wesley engaged vigorously in the political discourse of his era, just as he engaged his considerable intellectual powers on many other matters beside religion. Such is the tendency of polymaths. Not content to restrict his inquiring mind to a narrow field he took an interest in the natural sciences, in history, in economics, in languages. Why not, then, politics? (The only area that did not seem to interest him in other than a passing way were the dramatic arts about which he had little to say other than to be dismissive of them as frivolous and morally questionable.)

Pamela Edwards sees the political philosophy of the eighteenth century changing in three main ways. First, it developed as an extension of the debate over human nature so that politics and empiricism came together to consider the nature of the person as an acting, feeling, thinking, social being. Second, this discussion took place in terms of a civil discourse over ‘contract.’ What were the obligation that existed or ought to exist between a government and its people? Finally, with the creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain in 1707, a British nationalist identity emerged, as distinct from a more narrowly English one.¹³ Wesley’s political tracts reflect each of these changes, although Wesley is often more parochially ‘English’ in his sentiment. His political tracts are just that, political, not primarily theological, albeit like all of his many and varied reflections on God’s universe, built on a set of theological convictions. They are profoundly social and personal in delineating the obligations of trust that are to exist between the king, the parliament, and the people. They consistently reject, however, on both historical and pragmatic grounds, John Locke’s social contract theory with its idea that nations govern only by the consent of the governed.¹⁴

⁹ G.M. Ditchfield, ‘Methodism and the Evangelical Revival,’ in H.T. Dickinson, ed. *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 252 [hereafter referred to as *CECB*].

¹⁰ Keith Robbins stresses the international dimensions of John Wesley’s circle of contacts but also the limitations of his cultural scope. ‘Methodism, Globalisation and John Wesley,’ in W. Gibson, P. Forsaith and M. Wellings, eds. *The Ashgate Research Companion to World Methodism* (Farnham, Surrey and Wilmington VT, 2013), 199-213.

¹¹ G. O’Brien and H.M. Carey, ‘Introduction: Methodism and the Southern World,’ in G. O’Brien and H.M. Carey, eds. *Methodism in Australia: A History* (Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate), 1-11.

¹² W.R. Ward and R.P. Heitzenrater, *The Works of John Wesley vol. 22 Journal and Diaries V (1765-1775)* (Nashville: Abingdon: 1993), 394-95.

¹³ P. Edwards, ‘Political Ideas from Locke to Paine,’ in *CECB*, 294 (294-310).

¹⁴ D. Hempton, *Methodism and Politics*, 45.

Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1690) rejected the idea advanced in Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* (1680) that the king held a power derived from God to watch over his subjects as a loving father watches over his children. Locke did not reject the idea that government had a theological foundation, but he linked divine law with natural law to describe an original state of nature in which human beings held certain natural rights including the right to life, liberty, and property. These were gifts of God and hence inalienable. While Locke never argued for the abolition of the monarchy, he did locate sovereignty among the people who offered their consent to be governed by the rule of law. In the extreme circumstance in which this social contract was broken by a tyrant, the people had a right to resist and demand a restoration of the original terms of the contract. Trust between the people and the government was the glue that held this social contract together. Though this model is based on the personal element of 'trust' we will see that Wesley's own political philosophy (if it could be called that), places 'loyalty' at the centre of the social contract – loyalty to God, to the king, to the parliament, and to that ancient constitution which was the surest guarantee of the people's liberty. Though he was a self-described Tory he did not believe the king could act independently of this constitutional arrangement. Loyalty to the king meant loyalty to the 'king-in-parliament.' Stephen J. Plant has identified 'liberty and order' as one of the two 'base pairs' of the 'Methodist genome' derived from Wesley, along with 'evangelism and social holiness,' with the latter taking precedence over the former.¹⁵ I accept the ordering of priority but suggest 'liberty and loyalty' rather than 'liberty and order' as better reflecting the more personal and experiential approach in Wesley's social and political thought.

These two mutually supporting themes in Wesley's political thought fit squarely into the mentalities that dominated the Atlantic world of the long eighteenth century. Wesley understood natural liberty as a divine gift and believed that, though every person is born free, the protection and maintenance of civil and religious liberty is the responsibility of the state. The surest and safest way to maintain liberty was through loyalty to the crown. Just as natural liberty was a gift of God so the throne of England was God's gift, an anointed and benevolent monarch had been bestowed upon a grateful people. Within such a system, armed rebellion against the crown such as took place in the American colonies, and also threatened the home country itself, was an unthinkable horror.

In all of his political and social tracts, Wesley reflects a view of the Hanoverian kings as possessing a sacred aura and deserving of an almost unquestioning trust. It is simplistic to think of Wesley as a Tory who therefore supported the divine right of kings as a matter of course, when in fact both his views and those of the Tories in Parliament had undergone development in such a manner as to allow support for the Hanoverian succession based on more than hereditary succession. Wesley never understood the king to have a right to act in a tyrannical way without regard to the constitutional arrangements set in place in the Glorious Revolution. Loyalty was offered not to the king as an unaccountable and arbitrary tyrant, but to the king-in-parliament.

Ted Weber has argued that Wesley's political commitments were not based on any abstract theory but had a personal and communal structure.

Rights may be individual but, fundamentally they are socially constructed and defended. Rights that are embedded in institutions, and which enable the effective functioning of those institutions, are better guarantors of the rights of individuals than naked appeals to individual rights—especially when the appeals are driven by waves of popular sentiment. Wesley thinks in terms of organic connectedness, even though he seems to speak in terms of interchangeable parts. Personnel and offices do not stand apart from institutions, and institutions do not stand apart from their historical development and their enwebbing in the society. Neither are liberty and order separate political values. The political culture of England is an ordering of liberty that survives and prospers because there is liberty in the order. Liberty is not an abstraction; it is a constituent of a particular political-legal order. To set liberty against the order of its embodiment is to threaten the foundations of liberty. This may be a form of pragmatism for liberty, but if so, it is a deeply organic pragmatism.¹⁶

Certainly, order was highly prized by Wesley, but the personal element remained central. 'Order' itself is an abstract term, but loyalty is deeply personal, whether expressed in affection for the king, love for the people, or aversion to the profligate and disloyal John Wilkes. Wesley's own connexion of preachers was built on loyalty to himself and the doctrines and disciplines he set in place. The organic constitutionalism of Wesley was founded on an understanding of the contractual arrangement between king and people embedded in the ancient constitution now under threat by radical elements. George III came to see the burdens of his office as a kind of sacred responsibility imposed by a just Providence. To betray that trust would have dire consequences. The principle of joint sovereignty between the king and the parliament was grasped by the king 'with almost lunatic intensity.'¹⁷ A compromise with Wilkesite

¹⁵ S.J. Plant, 'Methodism and Politics: Mapping the Political on the Methodist Genome,' in *Ashgate Research Companion to World Methodism*, 346-50 (345-363).

¹⁶ T. Weber, *Politics in the Order of Salvation*, 96.

¹⁷ J.H. Plumb, *The First Four Georges* (London and Glasgow: Fontana, 1966), 117.

radicals or American rebels would have been the betrayal of a divine trust. If Wesley did not quite exhibit a 'lunatic intensity,' he may well have shared with his beloved king a similar sense of divine trust in upholding the constitutional arrangements that guaranteed liberty to every free subject of the crown.

IV. Some Discoveries

My investigation of Wesley's political and social tracts has uncovered some perhaps unexpected results.¹⁸ None would have doubted his loyalty to the crown, an element well covered in other treatments of Wesley's politics. It was a loyalty, however, not simply to the king as one having 'divine right.' Rather, Wesley saw the constitutional arrangements of 1688 in which king, parliament, and people inhabited a relationship of trust as the surest guarantee of religious and civil liberty. This loyalty had a strongly personal element, for, like Jesus, the king was a person. Wesley preached a gospel that 'offered Christ' to miners, agricultural workers, artisans and the rising 'middling sort,' who knew little of doctrinal and liturgical niceties but whose instinct for religion proved strong and lasting. This offer was fully in keeping with the 'turn to the person' inherent in the Enlightenment project, an enthusiasm both rational and religious. When it came to politics this personal approach was of a piece with his religious views. Did not the Scriptures teach devout believers to 'fear God and honour the king'? Was the king not a loving father of his people? Republicanism, rioting, avoidance of taxes, and aspersions on the king's good name were all acts of ingratitude unbecoming of those seeking perfection. This Methodist piety was not a selfish moralism, however, because the personal integrity it called for was exercised as part of a social contract held together by a compact of trust.

Wesley was somewhat discriminating in his support for monarchs. He was not a 'royalist' in the sense of giving all monarchs a free pass on their behavior. Indeed, he considered many to be moral degenerates. It was the king or queen who loved God and country who was deserving of unwavering support. No Stuart monarch could fit such a description because such a monarch was obligated by religious ties to papal, and thus foreign, power. Wesley's rejection of the Stuart claims was part of a larger view of history that saw 'the struggle between Protestants and Catholics as one battle in the larger war between liberty and arbitrary power.'¹⁹ Wesley's friend and fellow Methodist, George Whitefield, described the Jacobite invasion as backed by a 'horrid plot first hatched in hell, and afterwards nursed at Rome ... designed to bring Britain into 'vassalage to the see of Rome.'²⁰ Such views were typical of English Protestants who saw themselves as part of a global struggle to keep Catholicism at bay. To revert to Catholic rule would lead to the loss of both civil and religious liberty. Loyalty to a Protestant monarch whose 'sacred head' was anointed by the Spirit of grace, was seen as an irreducible element in the securing of that liberty.

Wesley's views of the king's sacred aura reflected the discourse about divine right that had been forged out of conflict between Tories and Whigs, opposition parties which eventually came to a considerable degree of common ground about the ideal monarch. Heredity alone was not enough to guarantee succession to the throne. There was a providential hand behind history guiding England to its enlightened status as a Protestant power. The king who best fitted into this providential plan was fit to rule regardless of hereditary claims.

The greater freedom given to expressions of political dissent during the reign of George III was alarming for Wesley partly because of his rejection of mob violence (something with which he had considerable personal experience) and because of the association of opposition politics with Dissenters. Unorthodox theological views such as Arianism and Unitarianism seemed strange bedfellows to one as deeply committed to the Anglican formularies as Wesley. It's not that there were no such views to be found in the Church of England, but Wesley had a very distinct and tightly held set of beliefs about the 'true religion' that had been entrusted to the state church. For him the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive church and the religion of the Church of England were of a piece.²¹ Given that so many of the more republican voices of the era, such as Richard Price and Joseph Towers, were Dissenters it is not hard to see how Wesley's political sentiments may have been informed by his theological commitments. Being Anglican was by no means a sufficient buffer against seditious ideas, however, as is made clear in the case of the radical parliamentarian John Wilkes. Here the personal element is likely to have coloured the political response. The morally bankrupt and sexually promiscuous Wilkes could

¹⁸ This section of the article is summative in nature and so does not include the full range of footnotes to the works on which the larger monograph is based.

¹⁹ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 76. For a longer range view of how the rhetoric of 'Catholic conspiracies' informed political ideas in early America see O. Stanwood, *The Empire Reformed: English America in the Age of the Glorious Revolution* (Philadelphia, 2013).

²⁰ G. Whitefield, 'Britain's Mercies and Britain's Duties,' *The Works of the Rev. George Whitefield* (London: 1771), V: 82.

²¹ J. Wesley, *Works*, 3:586.

hardly have drawn anything but censure from one as self-controlled and disciplined as John Wesley. That such a scurrilous rake as Wilkes should impugn the name of a godly king like George III and trumpet ideas that undermined the social contract of loyalty was simply beyond the pale. This is not to say that Wesley failed carefully to weigh up Wilkes' political ideas before finding them wanting, but it does indicate the personal element in the disagreement.

In rejecting the idea that political power originated with the 'people,' Wesley was attempting to 'resist the patriot mob.' The origin of all political power lay with God who had delegated it to certain representatives to whom due reverence and submission should be given. Wesley was adept in the 'language of liberty' that pervaded his era even if he took a different approach to a John Locke or a Thomas Paine. Civil and religious liberty were highly prized for Wesley but cries that these were being withheld from the people by a despotic king and a corrupt and dictatorial ministry simply did not pass his test of veracity. He did not believe that the propaganda about George III had any foundation and thought that the questioning of the king's motives masked a Cromwellian style plot to overthrow the ancient constitution. Should this happen all the current civil and religious liberties enjoyed by British subjects both at home and in America would be lost. Indeed, he believed this had already happened in the American colonies where a new form of tyranny had arisen – the tyranny of Congress which could brook no dissent and cruelly persecuted all who remained loyal to the crown.

Wesley's opposition to the American Revolution is the best-known feature of his political outlook. It was not because he did not share with Americans a concern for civil and religious liberty that he so staunchly opposed republican ideas. Indeed, he initially showed sympathy for Americans who were disadvantaged by the 'Intolerable Acts.' Americans were, after all, his people – British, Protestant, and (increasingly) Evangelical. Only when their rhetoric shifted from liberty to independence did Wesley begin to lose his love for the Americans. His accusations of a long-held plot to throw off the yoke of the British crown were informed by Joseph Galloway who had tried without success to keep the colonies united to George III. Galloway's claim that the Revolution was rooted in principles of Dissent that could be traced to the original seventeenth-century establishment of the colonies further fed into Wesley's suspicion of Dissenters.

Global political crises were, in Wesley's view, opportunities for personal repentance. In virtually all of his political tracts there is a call to respond with repentance and faith toward looming international crises. God was at work among the nations to sweep them out with a broom of destruction as an instrument of divine judgment. Should all the liberties enjoyed by British subjects be suddenly swept away what refuge would be left other than to be held in the bosom of a redeeming God? Wesley's political world was characterised by this personal element and this should not surprise us since his field preaching constituted an appeal to ordinary people to see themselves as objects of Christ's dying love, to seek refuge in his wounds, and as happy children to rush to the embrace of a crucified God. This may seem overly individualistic in an age like our own where political change is seen in terms of collective action, but it reflects the emphasis on the agency of the person typical of the eighteenth century. Methodism was the religion of the first-person personal pronoun, with a stress on personal agency that provided an avenue of individual choice that would lead in the nineteenth century to a wider participation of the ordinary person in the social sphere including in the world of politics.

Perhaps the most surprising discovery in this research was Wesley's virtual determinism. More virulent an anti-Calvinist than any other eighteenth-century figure, Wesley nonetheless held a providential view of history in which God's purposes for the nations could not be frustrated by any human action. His rejection of unconditional election and divine decrees of predestination on the personal level sat alongside a doctrine of God's sovereignty over public affairs as seemingly deterministic as any Calvinist's. This comes through most clearly in the hortatory exhortations to repentance that frequently appear at the end of his political tracts and in his eventual admission that the American Revolution (something he opposed for the entire duration of the war) was in the end an event permitted by Providence and thus something to be accepted as a new political reality. One section of the community of the people called 'Methodist' was now also an American people and their theological identity was for Wesley more determinative than the political arrangements under which they now lived. Reverent and passive submission to all constituted authority was the overarching biblical principle that Wesley affirmed. Such a principle would now be lived out for some Methodists under the conditions set in place under the American Constitution and for others under the king in parliament.

Though Wesley was not the same kind of one-eyed English patriot as John Wilkes and though he was willing to see Britain's empire crumble rather than depend on slavery, it is clear that he had a great love for his country and felt it the best constituted nation on earth. Britain was 'Protestant, maritime, commercial, and free' and thus exhibited qualities that made it, in Wesley's mind, a bulwark against tyranny, isolation, and want. Though celebrated as a proto-ecumenist for his Pietist insistence on privileging the religion of the heart over doctrinal agreement, it is impossible to avoid the fact that

Wesley shared the anti-Catholic sentiment that was typical of his era. His mission to Ireland depended for its success on the Protestant gentry class and the assumption of the ecclesial rule of the Church of Ireland over the Catholic majority population. His love for the English poor did not seem to be shared with their Irish counterparts whom he considered backward and superstitious in comparison with the German Pietist diaspora in Ireland. This latter community was thrifty, hardworking, pious, Protestant, and those most welcoming of his message, refracted as it had been through their own tradition as an originating source. Once again, we see the global dimensions of the discourse over liberty in the Irish nationalist identification with American colonists. In resisting what they perceived as a dictatorial ministry and a tyrannical king the Irish and the Americans shared in the same struggle. For Wesley, rebellion was rebellion whether across the Atlantic or across the Irish Sea. Concerns about a growing Catholic population in England in the 1770s and 1780s at the same time that Acts were being passed granting Catholics greater freedoms in both Britain and Canada led to public disturbances that drew Wesley into the fray. In spite of being generous to individual Catholics and deeply shaped by Catholic spiritual writers, he could not support the lifting of civil restrictions upon Catholics since to do so would threaten Britain's role as a global Protestant power.

Wesley's political ideas extended well into the nineteenth century as British Wesleyan Methodism developed into a vigorous and growing denomination. Though increasingly situated more in Nonconformity than Anglicanism, Wesleyan Methodism retained a degree of deference toward the Church of England and issued many attestations of loyalty to the crown. Wars with France in the Napoleonic era contributed to shoring up of this loyalty to the existing British political establishment as a safeguard against tyranny and revolution. Support for the ideals of the French Revolution on the part of many Dissenters was alarming to Wesleyans but such ideas penetrated the ranks of Methodism and cries for a more democratic ecclesial structure began to emerge. Attempts to silence such 'seditious' voices led inevitably to Methodist schisms, all of which can be seen as expressions of resentment at the lack of flexibility exhibited by central Conference authority. The rhetoric of liberty continued also in the American context where 'Republican' and 'Protestant' Methodists resisted Episcopal power as a betrayal of the ideals that had led to the founding of the United States. The right to the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness was not extended to slaves, however, and slavery would become the most disruptive element in American Methodism in the nineteenth century as it was indeed in American society more broadly. The abolition of the British slave trade can be seen as a natural extension of John Wesley's opposition and important Methodist leaders such as Jabez Bunting and Richard Watson played a significant activist role. That British Wesleyans failed to support the various mid-nineteenth-century industrial and agricultural reform bills underscores their essentially conservative outlook. At the same time the labour movement drew much of its leadership as well as its organisational machinery from the minor Methodist churches. Most of the more democratic ideals of the minor Methodists were eventually adopted by Wesleyans leading the way open to reconciliation between the various branches of Methodism. If the nineteenth century was an era of Methodist splintering, the ecumenical twentieth century would prove to be one of Methodist convergence.

Conclusion

Liberty and loyalty are the twin themes that help crystalize John Wesley's political outlook. Liberty was a divinely given capacity to which every person had as much right as breathing. While the origin of political power lay with God, human governments had the responsibility to provide both civil and religious liberty. The surest guarantee of such liberty was through the 'ancient constitution' given its purest embodiment in the constitutional arrangements of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. A devout Protestant king would rule over a grateful people, while being held accountable to God and to the Parliament for his actions as a check on tyranny. This was a form of social contract and loyalty to that contract would check seditious and rebellious grabs for power. Sentiments expressed by republican voices in America masked more sinister ambitions – an overthrow of the ancient constitution of Britain to be replaced by a democracy of 'the people.' In the end, however, the hand of an all-wise Providence guided historical forces and the best response to political fluctuations was a personal one – to make God one's friend through repentance and faith. John Wesley was not a politician or an economist or a military strategist. He was a priest and an evangelist, so that his global political world ultimately existed as a subset of a world bounded by the cosmic drama of salvation.

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