

DOCTRINE IN EXPERIENCE A METHODIST THEOLOGY OF CHURCH AND MINISTRY

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CHAPTER 3

EVOLVING PATTERNS OF METHODIST MINISTRY

What a presumptuous title! What a presumptuous endeavor, to essay the history of Methodist ministry in one chapter. For the topic is, in one sense, fully canvassed. The history of Methodist ministry is, in truth, what all Methodist histories are about. The history of the church—of Methodism in this instance—has been written by minister-historians, with primary attention to ministers and with data and documents maintained by ministerial scribes. Ministerial perspective and concerns pervade Methodist history.¹ In addition to the denominational histories, which implicitly treat the history of ministry, there have been insightful analyses of Methodist ministry by William Cannon, Gerald Kennedy, Frederick Norwood, Dale Dunlap, Thomas Oden, Dennis Campbell, William Willimon, and others.² What more is there to be said?

Here I will not try to say better what has been well said (though historians never acknowledge the final word to have been spoken). Rather, I want to view the evolution of Methodist ministry from another angle. If previous treatments might be termed internal in the sense that they worked from within the denomination, employed categories that emerged out of Methodist self-consciousness, and pursued the changes in Methodist ministry in relation to polity, this exploration might be termed comparative or external. What I offer is a perspective on the evolution of Methodist ministry—really only the itinerant ordained ministry, the elders—from without. It is an outside view in two senses. First, I am endeavoring to relate the Methodist ministry to some overall patterns in the history of American ministry. And second, the overall ministerial patterns are related to leadership styles in American society as a whole. So there is a double externality to my assessment. Put succinctly, my approach is comparative and cultural—

comparative in that it attempts to see the Methodist patterns in relation to the evolution of ministry in Protestant denominations, cultural in that it invites comparisons of the Methodist and Protestant patterns with the evolution of leadership in American society. The virtue of this approach is that it permits us a fresh look at a very familiar story.

HISTORY OF MINISTRY / MYTHOLOGY OF MINISTRY

We must begin in the history of ministry by confronting a myth, one that has dominated American ministerial self-understanding from at least the 1660s to the present.³ The myth insinuates itself into formal, historical treatments of ministry. Declension, that's the myth. That the ministry in the old days, the ministry we knew in our youth, the ministry that we have heard about—was esteemed, was effective, possessed authority, transformed people and congregations, was undaunted by the challenges it faced, preached with vigor and conviction, overcame temptations and distractions presented by worldly, familial, financial considerations. It was a ministry—and note the male chauvinism—of real men. "Oh, if the church were to be again blessed with such a ministry!" That's the refrain that echoes through ministerial conversations, that shapes ministerial self-understanding, that structures histories of ministry. But that refrain has been sung by ministers ever since the second generation of New England pastors came on the scene. If ministerial decline approximated that perception, ministry would have long ago totally disappeared. Changed? Yes, changed it has. Changed dramatically. But declined? We shall see.

The Methodist variant of that myth was well named and exposed by Nathan Bangs 130 years ago. "It is contended by some, as an evidence of our declension," he observed, "that our circuits are shortened, and cut up into stations, and that thus the labour of the ministry is abridged, and, of course, its usefulness curtailed."⁴ Such refrains became so common that the mythmakers earned the name "croakers."⁵ Bangs thought not and saw the changes in his day in ministry and church and society as the earnest for the millennium. But the myth lives on, intimately tied up with the

politics of appointments, the ongoing struggles between the power centers of the church, the relentless quest by every minister, church, superintendent, bishop, official, board to maximize autonomy and minimize external constraint. It is a myth that we must confront. We must move beyond a history of nostalgia, the mythology of declension, if we are to understand properly how ministry has changed. I hope my approach will help us battle this myth. Let me now turn our attention to the changing patterns in American ministry.

TYPES OF AMERICAN MINISTRY

Of necessity such a survey has to be highly selective and schematic. What follows is a brief version of a much fuller picture of ministry that I have attempted in other contexts. (1) Here I can only identify ministerial styles at certain points in American history, drawing on studies of ministry already noted. I shall isolate types or styles, realizing that reality was more complex. It is impossible in this chapter to follow the gradual transformations that produced these distinct ministerial styles. (2) I limit my presentation to the Puritan-Evangelical tradition, realizing that the richer texture of non-WASP styles is neglected. However, I would observe that the pattern discovered has something of a typological quality to it. Religious movements that followed the Puritans into the American wilderness have to a remarkable extent replicated the ministerial patterns identifiable in the New England experience. That attests either the enduring influence of Puritanism or the oft-made point that to an extent all American history is the history of immigration. I incline to the latter reading, namely that the history of all groups has an ethnic quality to it, that all movements have had to discover how to create and sustain a ministry in a new world. (3) I further sharpen the focus by examining the minister in society. That is, I will attempt to illustrate changes by looking at the *communal roles* played by ministers.

The first style of ministry made only a brief but important appearance in the 1630s.⁶ It was that of the spiritual leaders of the elite—educated and ordained in England and well versed in the debates and doctrines that we label Puritan—who gathered the

saints out of the mixed multitudes in New England. By testing one another's conversion experience, exiles created covenanted communities. The ministry labored from within these congregations to bring order into the emerging communities of New England. The minister shared the ordering role, with others, preeminently the magistrate whose equal the ministry very much was and around whom the civil covenant formed.

The second style of ministry—some now trained at Harvard—represented a stabilization and formalization of the highly visible, communal, local style of leadership. During the remainder of the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth, the Puritan ministry became an office, sharply conceived in Calvinist dogma, highly esteemed within the town in which it was exercised through word, sacrament, and discipline within a town. As no town was complete without a church and no church without its minister, the ministry was, with the magistrate, the visible sign of local community. A town built around a church—a Christian utopian closed corporate community as one scholar has suggested⁷—this community expressed but also limited the minister's world.

During the Great Awakening, a revivalist ministry loosed itself from these local moorings, beginning to travel and to view an emerging American society as fitting into God's plans. With millennial visions that embraced the English settlements of the new world, the ministry joined hands across colonial lines in a community of affectionate unity, established in the transformative experience of conversion, and knit together by evangelical or pietist practices. The sign of the new community and of the new form of ministry was itinerancy, illustrated in George Whitefield, the Tennents, Jonathan Edwards, a translocal and highly disruptive leadership style—a leadership style, one must add, anticipatory of the political leadership that would bring the Revolution. Empowered by a new rhetoric of the Spirit, this ministry brought into being a new voluntary form of Christian community, community defined by religious experience (conversion) and profession of belief rather than geography. Itinerant revivalists worked across the Atlantic seaboard, effecting both a new unity and a new division in American society. Sometimes censorious—criticizing as “unconverted” clergy who ignored or opposed the awakening—the small party of revivalists put a higher premium

on the renewed heart than the educated mind as credentials for preaching. As contrasted to the high office of the Puritan ministry, this was a popularly derived and spiritually communal style of leadership.⁸

During the Revolutionary period, the providential, covenantal, and millennial traditions of Puritanism and Evangelicalism were combined with the Republican ideology of English radicalism, applied to the nation and made available to the churches for statement of corporate purposes. After the Revolution in the succession of movements we call the Second Great Awakening, the ministry appropriated this new national corporate purpose in visions of Christian republicanism and programs of Democratic evangelicism. To achieve these high purposes evangelical ministers assumed a national role—the building of a Christian civilization; exercised that role in new national communities called denominations and voluntary societies; and became thereby a cadre of national leaders. Not surprisingly, the ministerial style resembled the leadership style prevalent in early nineteenth century American society, that of the booster, the community builder, the propagandist for new opportunities. Like the local politician who would make a frontier land tract the new Philadelphia, like the merchant who envisioned his business the base of a new Wall Street, like the college president who foresaw a new Harvard in his handful of poor students and hastily erected buildings, the minister of that day was a booster for religious development with national pretensions. That peculiar style of revivalistic and missionary leadership so obvious in a Finney or a Cartwright was but the religious variant of the booster style.⁹ Illustrative of the national community within which ministry was now set was a new pattern of ministerial mobility. Ministers held pastorates for brief periods and then moved on. This was true for Congregationalists as for connectionalists. Ministry deployed itself nationally. Ministers became agents for the creation of national community, a Christian America.

Before and after the Civil War, denominations internalized Christian culture, towns displaced frontier and ministry once again stabilized itself as a familiar and important feature of local community. Seminaries developed or grew to equip ministry for a broader range of pastoral tasks. And just as ministry was settling

into civic and religious maturity in a small-town Christian America, this America was no longer. By century's end, Protestants awoke to discover massive immigration of non-Protestants; sprawling urban areas whose slums bred all manner of moral, economic, and political intemperance; labor strife; huge corporate structures lumbering across the economic frontiers and justifying their dominance with *laissez-faire* rhetoric framed for a simpler world; vast gulfs between rich and poor; and, of course, challenges to the Protestant worldview from Darwinism, history, sociology, socialism, and biblical criticism. Various new ministerial styles emerged in this complex new world. One numerically small but culturally significant new ministerial style characterized the prophetic, reformist, literary movement we call the Social Gospel. Not disposed to relinquish the vision of a Christianized America nor to labor for it in the older mode—through revivals—the Social Gospel ministry sought national leadership and national community by transforming both agenda and style. The Social Gospel ministry cautiously embraced the new intellectual trends, discovered its own social-ethical commitments in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament and the synoptic Jesus of the New and made itself the biblical herald of a liberalized Protestantism. Under the prophet's mantle lurked the leadership style of the Progressive Movement. Here as in previous styles of ministry, in both the national Protestant community to which it preached and in the reformist style it adopted, the Social Gospel partook of the communal and leadership styles of the day. Like Progressivism, the Social Gospel ministry's aspirations exceeded its attainments. In fact, the Social Gospel exposed and widened the divisions in Protestantism. The community of the Social Gospel, though indeed national, was but one wing of a divided Protestantism. The prophet's fate—to call all to a renewal of vision and capture only some.

In the twentieth century that social gospel style lived on, but so did older forms. And to them has been added a great variety of new forms of ministry, too many to adequately survey in this brief analysis. For purposes of comparison only, permit me to isolate the suburban style as one of a range of twentieth-century ministries whose sense of community and approach illustrates one twentieth-century trend. In suburbia, ministers became pastoral administrators,

Their roles were greatly constricted in terms of the external community but greatly expanded in terms of internal community. Leaving long pastorates where Protestants lived and continuing long-established activity in local community, the ministers often lacked access to the work world in which much of their congregation participated. The religious community for which the minister was responsible was, in a sense, squeezed into the family. But at the same time as the external religious community was made peripheral to much of American life, the internal community within which the ministry now labored—the realm of the spirit, of spiritual and emotional problems, of family discord, of divorce—expanded greatly. Through the appropriation of psychology, ministry expanded pastoral counseling both directly and through sermons into the depths of the lives of the people. And through appropriation within congregations and denominations of corporate forms of organization, ministry transformed congregational and denominational life into complex institutions. Both psychological and organizational skills demanded sophisticated and well-trained leaders. Ministry, like much of American leadership, professionalized itself. Appropriate to this professional self-understanding and to the way in which professionalism divided up American life, ministry came to play a professionally dominant role in the smaller community.

EVOLUTION VERSUS DECLENSION

I noted at the outset that the myth of declension bedevils analysts of ministry. Some interpreters would treat change as decline. They would tell my tale as one of ever-increasing irrelevance of ministry as constriction of community and gradual professionalization, which moved ministry from the center of Puritan community as an office to the periphery of corporate, industrial America as profession. The analysis I have just given suggests another reading. The change in ministry is not a gradual slide from prominence into obscurity but rather of a ministry changing appropriately to suit the dominant form of community of the day and adopting a leadership style prominent in America of that day and pertinent to religious community as well.

Architect of order for exilic congregations, an office within the Puritan town, an itinerant and transcolonial style as Americans discovered one another, a national boosterism exercised through denominations and voluntary societies in the building of a Protestant culture, a small-town pastorate prominent in America as a network of villages, a prophetic and literary protest against a troubled and inhumane national community, and a pastoral administrator for a complex and professionalized America that has divided work and home—ministry has altered its style and expanded or concentrated its community to suit changes in American life.

The pattern is rather more a zigzag than a slide. And the future is very much open. We need not extrapolate from my analysis any pattern of irrelevance or secularization that diminishes the importance of ministry. Change it has; but decline, I think not.

THE METHODIST PATTERN

How might this investigation be applied to Methodist ministry? What might we gain from thinking about the evolution of itinerancy in comparative and cultural analysis? To what extent has the Methodist pattern resembled or diverged from one normed on Puritanism and Congregationalism? What might we gain from attacking the mythology that surrounds our ministerial self-understanding through a perspective from without? To answer these questions I have begun my investigation at a somewhat unconventional point. Rather than track legislation on the itinerary, plowing through disciplines and general conferences, I have begun with ministerial manuals. Limiting myself to The Methodist Episcopal Church, I have analyzed selected how-to books, those formal and published efforts by members of the guild to counsel apprentices. My assumption is that such works both reflect and shape ministerial self-understanding. The assumption is warranted because the books used carried one of several kinds of imprimatur. (1) They were included in the course of study (note that for the MEC the course was the standard mode of theological education until the turn of this century, required even for seminary graduates);¹⁰ (2) they were issued by the Methodist Publishing House of the day; (3) they were written by a Methodist leader.

THE DECLINE OF THE ITINERANCY?

If one is dead set upon documenting the decline of the itinerancy, the dismounting of the circuit rider, and the congregationalizing of the connective system, one can certainly read the manuals to sustain that prejudice. Certainly Methodist itinerancy has changed. Six-month appointments lengthened to a year, to two years, to four, and now to longer, open-ended assignments. Health concerns have changed as well. Adam Clarke's *Letter to a Methodist Preacher*, which went through several American and a number of English editions, bespeaks the travails of itinerancy.

From the nature of your work, you must be unavoidably exposed to all kinds of weather—damp houses, bad beds, innutritious food, and a terrible catalogue of *et cetera*. The bad effects of these you may in some measure endeavour to counteract, or to suspend for a time; but you cannot ultimately prevent them from hurrying you into eternity. Whatever deference I may feel myself inclined to pay to the assertion of a great man, *vis.*, that a *minister of the gospel is immortal till his work is done*, yet I am satisfied that he who preaches the gospel as he ought, will, unavoidably, sooner or later, become a *martyr* to his work.

Never sleep in a damp bed; this is certain death, especially to a delicate constitution.

Do not keep the same shirt on during the day in which you have slept the preceding night; the matter of insensible perspiration is expelled from the body because it is noxious, and cannot be reabsorbed without doing the constitution great injury; and reabsorbed it must be, if you continue to wear the same linen during the day, in which you slept all night.

Never dry your wet clothes while you have them on; this is very injurious. If you have no change of raiment, (and it often happens that a Methodist preacher has but one coat,) walk in the open air till they are dry, or go to bed that they may be dried at the fire.¹¹

Clark then gave extended counsel on regularity, for which I will refer you to the original.

Matthew Simpson's *Lectures of Preaching*, given as the Beecher lectures at Yale and doubtless shaped for that audience but carried on the 1880 and 1884 courses of study, attends to health concerns of a different order—those of a stationed pastor. (Do his musings suggest a medical rationale for the waning of the Methodist spirit?):

The principles of ventilation are generally but poorly understood by sextons. They usually confound warm air with pure air, and keep the rooms closed to have them warm. The interest of many a service is destroyed by this means. People wonder what is the matter with their preacher and with themselves. They have no life, no enthusiasm. They cannot have any when their lungs are loaded with impure exhalations, and the brain is oppressed with imperfectly oxygenated blood. I believe that the health of many a minister suffers severely, and his life is not infrequently shortened, in consequence of the poor ventilation of crowded houses.¹²

By the twentieth century, the health concerns were not only localized but internalized. The *Ministerial Ethics and Etiquette* of Nolan Harmon and the Abingdon publications of Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, and by John Spann, *The Ministry*,¹³ suited a ministry whose significant itineration was to the hospital and home of the physically or emotionally diseased.

The health concerns in the manuals illustrate—what might be as readily documented with other aspects of ministry—that the meaning of itinerancy has changed dramatically. But is change necessarily decline? The manuals can be read to confirm the decline of the itinerancy, if the three- or six-month appointments of Asbury and the double form of itinerancy—itinerancy from circuit to circuit and itinerancy within the circuit—is taken as normative. But do we not gain a fresh perspective on the changes in itinerancy if we view the changes as occasioned by the changing character of community in America, the shifts in ministerial style adopted by other denominations, and the Methodist participation in both community and leadership transformation?

Exilic Ministry: Ambassadors of Spiritual Community

Let us look briefly at the evolving understanding of Methodist ministry. Methodists generally and early Methodist historians in

particular deemed their itinerant connectionalism providentially given for spreading scriptural holiness and reforming the nation. Well they might. For early American Methodism rather effectively combined the first and third styles of American ministry—the exilic leadership, which quested after order and discipline, with the revivalistic itinerancy, which sought spiritual community. This unity of styles gave Methodist ministry a rather unique power. It was able both to preserve and order the faith of those who by heritage or outlook were predisposed to Methodism and to capture persons and communities spiritually and morally at sea in this new society. Methodists knew their business.

The earliest American Methodist ministerial manual was the *Discipline*. Like Wesley's *Large Minutes*, which it superseded and on which it initially depended very heavily, the *Discipline* outlined Wesley's pragmatically and providentially derived counsel for men exiled from home to preach on the itinerant plan. The first, the 1785 *Discipline*, even employed Wesley's term *helper* for minister and faithfully reproduced with but minor alterations, "The Rules of a Helper."¹⁴ Hence the first style of American Methodism ministry was a Wesleyan and British invention. That may have been superficially obscured by the rearrangement and Methodizing of the *Discipline* that began with the 1787 edition. But the Rules of a Helper recast as "the Directions given to a Preacher" still read:

1. Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away Time; neither spend any more Time at any Place than is strictly necessary. . . .
11. You have nothing to do but to save Souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this Work. And go always not only to those that want, but to those that want you most. . . .
12. Act in all Things, not according to your own Will, but as a Son in the Gospel. As such it is your Part to employ your Time in the Manner which we direct: Partly in reading, Meditation and Prayer. Above all, if you labour with us in our Lord's Vineyard, it is needful you should do that Part of the Work which we advise, at those Times and Places which we judge most for His Glory.¹⁵

The American communities evoked by such Wesleyan ministry were also intense and single-minded, very much like those initially

called into being by Puritan divines, though nurtured by an itinerating rather than a settled ministry.

One of the early Methodist manuals, containing both Adam Clarke's *A Letter to a Preacher* and Thomas Coke's *Four Discourses on the Duties of a Ministry of the Gospel*,¹⁶ counsels and illustrates the sharply focused character of early itinerancy. Clark directed, "Your call is not to instruct men in the doctrines and duties of Christianity merely; but to convert them from sin to holiness. A doctrine can be of little value that does not lead to practical effect; and the duties of Christianity will be preached in vain to all who have not the principle of obedience."¹⁷

Echoing the language and instructions of Wesley's "Rules of a Helper," Clarke and Coke desired self-educated, experiential Christians who shunned politics and poetry, felt the truth they preached and preached it alone. Traveling ambassadors of spiritual community they must be:

Never disappoint a place.

Be punctual. . . .

Never leave any place you visit without reading a portion of Scripture and praying with the family.

Should you be invited to any place where you are not permitted to pray with the family, never go thither again; and give them your reason. An ambassador of God should be transacting the business of his Master withersoever he goes; and where he is not permitted to do it, there God has not sent him.¹⁸

Coke drew out the implications for ministerial style:

The ambassador of a king speaks only in the name of his employer: he knows no other man while he acts from the authority, and is concerned with the interests of the kingdom he represents: he lays aside the private character, and appears always in his public capacity.¹⁹

As ambassadors, Methodist ministers exercised authority in this world but belonged not to it. No court or palace for them, they presented their revivalistic credentials on the circuit, in quarterly

meetings and especially in camp meeting. Itinerants were truly exiles, ambassadors of the spiritual realm. Hence as Coke insisted, "The spirit of our ministry is a spirit of separation from the world."²⁰ Exilic ministry it was, reinforced by the separation from friends and family occasioned by constant travel and sharply focused upon exercising a revivalistic ambassadorship. And Clarke's directions to the people echo that sense of a narrow ambassadorial mandate: "Receive the preacher as the ambassador of God, sent particularly to *you* with a message of salvation. Listen attentively to every part of the sermon—there is a portion for *you* somewhere in it; hear *all*, and you are sure to discern what belongs to yourself."²¹

He continued with language that suggested the liabilities and limitations of community dependent upon only periodic ministerial sustenance of poorly trained but earnest and dedicated young men.

Do you think that this or the other preacher cannot instruct *you*. He may be, comparatively speaking, a *weak* preacher: but the meekest servant of God's sending will at all times be directed to bring something to the wisest and holiest Christians which they have not fully known or enjoyed before. You do not depend upon the man's abilities; if he be a preacher of God's making, he is God's mouth; and by him the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of unerring counsel, of infinite wisdom, and eternal love, will speak to you.²²

Coke summed it up well:

I am very conscious, brethren, that our itinerant plan is to be preferred to any other *in this* as in a thousand respects. We are seldom tempted to be in the world. We must love it exceedingly if we find many occasions to be in it. Our time is spent between the mount, the multitude, and our own people. We almost continually reside in families which look for, and which love and honour, the seriousness and gravity of their preacher.²³

The Booster

The exilic-revivalist style of ministry—alienated from the world, dependent upon families for sustenance and community, meagerly

equipped for pastoral work and narrowly focused in its concerns—transformed itself quickly, almost immediately, into national boosterism through the Methodist connection. I have not yet uncovered an early nineteenth-century manual that reflects that transition. By the 1830s publications clearly indicate that Methodism was very much at home in American society. Nathan Bangs' *An Original Church of Christ: Or A Spiritual Vindication of the Orders and Powers of the Ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, a defense of Methodist against its detractors, attested that sense of legitimacy in the community of Christian America. Bangs insisted:

The method of propagating these doctrines and enforcing these rules, by an itinerant ministry, with all those auxiliaries afforded us by class leaders, stewards, exhorters, and local preachers, is admirably adapted to give a diffusive spread to the gospel of God our Savior, and to build up the people in holy living.

At the same time he noted that Methodist ministry had changed:

In the extension of the work, it has been found expedient so to modify some of those external features of the system as to meet the exigencies of the times, and take advantage of the improvements of the age, and to reach the greatest possible portion of mankind with the benign influences of religion.²⁴

In a later work, *The Present State, Prospects, and Responsibilities of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, he spoke even more directly of the change in ministry concomitant with the change in community.

Under the joint superintendency of Bishops Asbury and McKendree, I was appointed, in 1813, to the Rhinebeck District, which then comprehended what are now Poughkeepsie, Rhinebeck, New-Haven, and Hartford districts, in all of which there was but one single station, and that so feeble as scarcely to show signs of life. After going around the district once or twice, I said to the preachers, "You might as well go home and go to sleep, as to preach in the manner you do, so far as building up Methodism is concerned. You may indeed be instrumental in the awakening and conversion of sinners; but while you preach once in two weeks in a place on week-days and Sabbaths, and are absent from your appointments all the rest of your time, though

sinners may be awakened, yet, during your absence, other denominations, who have stated ministrations every Sabbath, and whose ministers are constantly among the people, will gather the principal part of them into their churches, and thus you lose all your labour, so far as the Methodist Episcopal Church is concerned." "What shall we do?" It was asked. "We must go to work and build meeting-houses, and have a preacher stationed in every city and considerable village in the country, in order to establish Methodism."²⁵

Bangs was more than just pragmatic here. He saw in such changes, as had Wesley, that both problems and success had disclosed a more appropriate style of ministry.

The fact is, a competent preacher stationed in one place, if as diligent as he ought and may be, will soon familiarize himself with his people; can visit the sick, the delinquents, and incite them forward in the discharge of duty; bury the dead, perform the marriage ceremony, meet the classes, attend prayer-meetings, and perform all other pastoral duties, and then have time enough for study.²⁶

Revivals and membership growth, Bangs believed, attested the providential character of the change, but he nonetheless played an important role in changing the Methodist ministerial style to suit new and more stable forms of American community. "The present system, therefore, of a more contracted sphere of labour, is the natural result of the improved state of society, of the greater population and compactness of the villages and settlements."²⁷

The changing character of Methodist and American community and of Methodist ministry that Bangs perceived, was the grounds on which advocates of theological education in the 1850s pled their case. Randolph S. Foster in *A Treatise on the Need of the M. E. Church With Respect to Her Ministry* insisted that "Methodism is not now, either positively or relatively, what it was in its inception, or early manifestations; other Church organizations are not what they were; society is not what it was."²⁸ He noted how piety, thrift, industry, prudence had wrought a change in the Methodist people, leading them to respect for education and culture; how other churches had caught "the reformation spirit," "provoked by our example, and emulous of our zeal," producing "A new race of

ministers," and how society had also "undergone and is yet undergoing, a great change—a rapid and glorious transformation," epitomized in progress and the diffusion of information. In these altered circumstances, Foster saw a mandate for an educated and well-trained ministry: "Hence . . . an emergency is upon us. We must adapt ourselves to the change or our mission is accomplished, and other hands now ready will enter into our labors, and gather our ripe and ample harvest; or it will remain ungarnished to rot in the unreaped field."²⁹

Not all sized up the situation as Foster did. Persons like Alfred Brunson in *The Gospel Ministry: Its Characteristics and Qualifications* knew theological education to be the ruin of Methodist ministry. Speaking of graduates of such institutions, he affirmed:

But of this class of preachers, experience proves, that one fourth have so ruined their healths in their *modern* cloisters, as to be *unable* to endure the fatigues and privations of the itinerancy; another fourth are so in debt that they much teach school or enter into some other more lucrative business than the itinerancy to raise means to pay for their education, and by the time this is done they will have contracted tastes, habits of living, etc., and that can never be met in the itinerancy unless very specially favored, and therefore never enter that field; another fourth, if they enter this field, do it with such exalted views of their superior advantages and qualifications, that they must be favored with the best, easiest, and best paying appointments; and, of course, but one fourth are ready and willing to take share in "the rough and tumble work" of the itinerancy.³⁰

The debate on theological education, an important one, had long-term implications for Methodism. At stake, among other things, were the very nature of Methodist community and the style of Methodist ministry. It is instructive to note that both sides saw that the issue was whether the ministry evolved culturally as the Methodist people climbed the socioeconomic ladder or targeted itself at the common people. Their choices differed. And the choices are well illustrated by the secular leadership with whom Foster and Brunson compared the minister. Foster thought of the doctor and the lawyer. Brunson ranged more broadly—"The farmer, mechanic, doctor, lawyer, sailor, or soldier."³¹ Both assumed that ministry through Methodism was to be instrumental

in the building of a Christian America. Methodist ministers were to be boosters of a Christian nation either by shaping culture or by conquering its people *or* both.

The differences on ministry and mission produced more than debate and founding of theological seminaries. Some who shared Brunson's angle and felt that Methodism must sustain its commitment to the poor followed B. T. Roberts in a prophetic revolt that led, on the eve of the Civil War, to the formation of the Free Methodist Church.³² Free Methodists were not the first nor would they be the last to hold up earlier styles of camp meeting and revivalistic ministry as essential for reaching the unchurched in American society. Others shared Bangs's conviction that the already-churched-but-prone-to-wandering-or-backsliding needed their primary attention.

Pastor in Small Town America

After the Civil War, Methodism enjoyed through its leadership a national prominence but with other denominations, I would argue, came to exercise its primary influence in American society through ministry to the stable communities that dotted the land. Matthew Simpson's *Lectures on Preaching*, speaking out of Methodism to a wider audience, described and prescribed a ministerial role appropriate for American town community. Comparing the minister with other servants of the local community—the doctor, lawyer, and politician—Simpson posited that the minister must be both preacher and pastor:

Preaching is the chief work, but not the only work, of a Christian minister. He organizes Churches, leads the public devotions of the people, administers the ordinances, and superintends important movements both within and without his own congregation. Yet all these works bear a distinct relation to his office as a preacher; they either issue from it, or are auxiliary to it.³³

Simpson portrayed the minister as the center of two communities, the congregation and the society. He envisioned the minister as exercising the pastoral office in its fullness—visiting, praying, preaching, superintending the Sunday school and selecting its books and teachers, organizing the church, evangelizing and enlisting

new members, managing buildings and property, dealing with church officers, supporting the benevolent and missionary enterprises of the larger church, controlling the access to his people by evangelists. He also urged labor in the society as a whole. Though the minister should be wary of purely political involvements, he should use his influence on the organizations and associations in society to shape their directions and bind them to the church, he should mount the platform, and he should participate actively in the benevolent movements. Here was a ministry very much at home in the stable communities of a Christianized culture. Reflecting that at-homeness, Simpson provided the minister counsel on how to carry on pulpit exchanges in a cooperative fashion and how to find work for every member of the congregation. Already looming over that well-ordered community were the intrusive strains of the Gilded Age. Simpson alluded to the growth and complexity of corporations and organization, welcomed the findings of science and insisted on the power of the pulpit in American society.

The Prophetic Preacher

A generation later, Protestants were no longer so sanguine. Not in the vanguard of the Social Gospel, Methodists took it into the system and contributed mightily to it. The ministerial manuals of the early twentieth century—and by then they proliferated—vary in the degree to which they explicitly counseled Social Gospel activity but more generally reflected this new style of ministry and the complexities of twentieth-century religious community. William A. Quayle's *The Pastor-Preacher* published in 1910, which remained on the Course of Study for five quadrennia from 1912 to 1932, framed the ministry so as to fit it for Social Gospel battles even while he urged entry into civic concerns only cautiously. He could think of no "manlier business than preaching." For Quayle, "Preaching is a robust business. It is in nothing ladylike. . . . The preacher is not a man of cartilage; he is a man of bone and sinew. He feels the riot of mighty deeds. Life is epic to him." The Social Gospel imagery defined the role:

We shall not fill up the ranks of the ministry by talking smooth talk of ease of emulment. THAT IS NOT HOW THE MATTER IS. The battle beats fiercely. It is against princely and powers,

against spiritual wickedness in high places; it is tireless as the dreadful fight before Port Arthur. The easy brother should not undertake this job. I call it "job" because that is what it is. Put preaching where it belongs, not with the so-called learned professions, but with the eternal working professions, the serious sweaty toils of men, where the corn is planted and the wheat is reaped and the trenches are dug and the sewers laid—the everlasting labors of mankind.³⁴

Quayle wanted activities; he said at one point, "The football men are the men wanted here. . . . I would have every candidate for the ministry play football. It would teach him impact and to see with quick eye the need, and with spirit and body agility to cope with the need. The great, bleak, angry line of Sin, what shall a preacher do with that? And the only logical reply as well as the only scriptural reply is, 'Rush against it.'"³⁵ Interestingly, Quayle was equally eloquent on the importance of cultivation of intellectual strengths and has some timeless counsel to offer on how the minister should read. Broadly, sums it up. One excerpt gives us a hint of his insight:

If a congregation can discover by a preacher's Sunday utterances where the preacher's week-day reading has been, then it is that preacher in sore need of amplifying. A preacher's entire life of reading (in so far as a book may) should minister to each Sunday's utterance, and not some book on which he browsed during the week.³⁶

Quayle urged ministers to combine this wide knowledge with a comparable knowledge of human nature acquired through visiting and to focus sharply through the Book of God on "life from God's standpoint."³⁷

In his *The Theology of a Preacher*, which appeared in 1912, Lynn Harold Hough reflected the Social Gospel's desire to make theology relevant to life. He insisted that "the first important thing about a preacher is that he should be alive . . . rich in vital qualities, . . . quickly responsive to all the currents that play through human experience, . . . vividly, deeply, and vigorously alive." A "deep experience of human things and a deep experience of divine things"³⁸ would make preaching and theology alive and would create Hough's ideal, the preacher-theologian.

Methodism's more thorough appropriation of the Social Gospel ministry is to be seen in the fact that it mandated a current edition of Washington Gladden's manual, *The Christian Pastor and The Working Church*³⁹ on the 1924 course of study. Further, one of the premier Methodist social gospelers, Francis John McConnell, produced his own manual, *The Preacher and the People* in 1922.⁴⁰ The church carried on the 1928, 1932, and 1936 courses yet another work that reflected the Social Gospel, James A. Beebe's *The Pastoral Office*. Beebe called Gladden's manual "the most impressive description of the work of the Protestant minister in more than a quarter of a century," and sought a similar aim in his own effort. One statement will have to suffice as illustration of his concern: "The church must become social toward its several parts and be filled with the spirit of cooperation toward all other community institutions. It must learn to think of itself, not as an end, but as a means (and not the only means) of Christianizing society."⁴¹

This progressive trend culminated perhaps in the manuals of G. Bromley Oxnam, particularly, *Preaching in a Revolutionary Age* and his edited volume, *Preaching and the Social Crisis*.⁴²

The Pastoral Administrator: Professionalization of Ministry

The transition to the final style of preaching and community, that of pastoral administrator, was prefigured in Beebe's manual. Beebe had placed most of the work of ministry under "administration"—"The Administration of Worship," "The Administration of Evangelism," "The Administration of Religious Education," "The Administration of Service," and "The Administration of Finance"—and he prescribed means to structure the church and establish committees "to supervise the great essential tasks of the church."⁴³

Methodists appropriated the other half of the intellectual-practical resource for a ministry of pastoral administration, that from the psychological revolution, somewhat more gradually, at least insofar as it was attested by Methodist manuals for clergy. By the 1940s, however, Methodists evidenced such appreciation in the rubrics descriptive of the minister's work in a volume edited by J. Richard Spann and entitled simply *The Ministry*. Spann and company treated the minister as preacher, priest, comforter, counselor,

religious educator, leader of people and program, and director of public relations. Experts in each of these fields gave the ministers their professional advice. A fuller integration of the administrative and psychological roles into a professional ministerial style is found in the Abingdon publications by the Princeton pastoral theologian, Seward Hiltner, especially in his *Preface to Pastoral Theology*. Hiltner gathered the operations of ministry under the rubrics of shepherding, communicating, and organizing. In his brief for pastoral theology from those perspectives, Hiltner made the pastoral administrator style triumphant.

I need not dwell on this style. Seward's work and that of his many colleagues and students is familiar to most of us. The style was well described by H. Richard Niebuhr in *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* with the rubric, "pastoral director."⁴⁴ I would bid you to turn to that work for further illustration.

CONCLUSION

Myths exercise great power over the human mind. United Methodists function with a myth mediated by pictures like this and by its more stylized and iconic version on publications from The United Methodist Publishing House.



In so imaging our itinerant ministry in its circuit rider version, we imprint a peculiarly Methodist myth of declension in our individual and collective consciousness. The icon can have enervating consequences. By no stretch of the imagination can we equate the long, relatively stable, parishlike appointments of today with the onerous travels of our ancestors. The familiar—no, almost constant—imagining of itinerancy invites us into a rather easy and negative judgment of present-day ministry. Such images, I believe, govern standard readings of Methodist ministry at one level or another. Charting the changes in and timetables of the itinerant system, we tend to

impulsively do so with this iconic image and Methodist categories derived therefrom that reinforce (implicitly) a mythology that treats the initial Wesleyan horseback pattern as normative and deviation as declension.

Here I have sought to break the power of that mythology. Instead, I invite us to view the changes that Methodist ministry underwent as part and parcel of significant alterations in the style of leadership—religious and secular—in American society. To be sure, one can construe the convergence of Methodist with societal (and overall Protestant) patterns as compromise or capitulation to society or culture. Those who read changes in that fashion, I believe, fail to recognize the significant role that Methodists played in the creation of those patterns. That point is covered elsewhere in this volume. Here I would only insist that the convergence of Methodist and societal patterns can be read as incarnation as well as compromise. My own inclination is to value positively the successive stages in Methodist ministry and to see them as highly relevant to the religious needs and social realities of those whom the church sought to save and serve.

It seems fitting to conclude with a statement from H. Richard Niebuhr, who concerned himself both with the nature of ministry and the relations of religion to culture. One statement helps us assess what I have attempted here. Niebuhr observed:

Whenever in Christian history there has been a definite, intelligible conception of the ministry four things at least were known about the office: what its chief work was and what the chief purpose of all its functions; what constituted a call to the ministry; what was the source of the minister's authority; and whom the minister served.⁴⁵

It is on the first and last that I have dealt, endeavoring to share several definite, intelligible conceptions of ministry in Methodist history. It is easy when we look back to permit nostalgia to breed inferiority, to recognize the accomplishments of past ministry in such a way as to minimize those of the present, to so mythologize the ministerial heritage as to place us much beneath those who have trod before. When Gibson Winter wrote of *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches*⁴⁶ and when we speak out of our rich Social Gospel heritage of the great ethical challenges of our day, we rather belittle the suburban ministry that so many of us now exercise. I

certainly would not want to prescribe suburban pastoral administration as the only and future style of Methodist ministry. Neither would I want to demean it. Rather I would insist, as this chapter has sought to show, that ministerial style evolves appropriately with the changes in community—religious and societal—into forms fit for the day. Our future is every bit as glorious as our past. To think otherwise is to malign the Holy Spirit.

- 1932, 1936, 1940, and 1944; for the first three as a requirement for admission on trial and for the last as collateral reading.
72. Sweet, *Methodism in American History*, Revision of 1953 (Nashville: Abingdon Press [1954]), 27.
73. *Ibid.*, 143.
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*, 143-53.
76. Sweet employed this, in a more generalized form, as his organizing principle in *Religion in the Development of American Culture, 1765-1840* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952).
77. Sweet, *Methodism*, 8, 336.
78. Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), 79. *Ibid.*, 15-17.
80. *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (1788), 7-15.

3. EVOLVING PATTERNS OF METHODIST MINISTRY

1. It is only in the last several decades that we have come to appreciate the elitism and presumption of writing the history of the church—of Methodism in this instance—with primary attention to the ministry. Women's history, Black history, the "academic" study of religion, and the new social history have served to open up the wider history of the people of God and called into question the easy equation of ministerial perspective, records, and accomplishment with the history of the church. During this period in which church history has recognized its myopic clericalism and sought to be more embrace, a new investigation of the history of ministry—now undertaken as an enterprise in its own right—has emerged. Among the several contributions to this endeavor are David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972); Emory Elliott, *Power and the Pulpit in Puritan New England* (Princeton University Press, 1975); J. William T. Youngs, Jr., *God's Messengers: Religious Leadership in Colonial New England, 1700-1750* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Donald M. Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977); and E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978). Following the New England bias typical of so much of American church history, these histories of ministry (except the last) have focused on Puritan and Congregational ministry. The major historical effort on Methodist ministry of which I am aware is the dissertation by James Lynn, "The Concept of the Ministry in the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1784-1844" (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1973). What distinguishes this work from older histories of ministry is the self-conscious endeavor to reflect on status, roles, self-understandings, authority, work of ministers, and the evolution of these over time. I shall attempt to pursue some of these issues in relation to Methodist ministry. Such a perspective does not replace but rather supplements that provided in older treatments of ministry, as for instance in H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams, eds., *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956); and James Gustafson, "The Clergy in the United States," *Daedalus* (1963): 724-44. For comparative purposes see also Jacob Neusner, ed., *Understanding American Judaism*, 2 vols. (New York: Ktav, 1975); John Tracy Ellis, ed., *The Catholic Priest in the United States* (Collegeville, MN: St. John's University Press, 1971); and Charles V. Hamilton, *The Black Preacher in America* (New York: Morrow, 1972).
2. See William R. Cannon, "The Meaning of the Ministry in Methodism," *Methodist History* 8 (October 1969): 3-19; Gerald Kennedy, "The Methodist Ministry," in *The Methodist Way of Life* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1958), 109-21; Frederick A. Norwood, "The Shaping of Methodist Ministry," *Religion in Life* 43 (1974): 337-51; E. Dale Dunlap, "The

- United Methodist System of Itinerant Ministry: Its Nature and Future," *Occasional Papers*, No. 30 (1980) (United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry); Daniel I. Marsh, "The Ministry in the Methodist Church," in *Approaches Toward Unity* (Nashville: Parthenon, 1952), 75-85; and Gerald O. McCulloh, ed., *The Ministry in the Methodist Heritage* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960); Dennis M. Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988); William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002); Thomas E. Frank, *Polity, Practice and the Mission of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006); and Beth Barton Schweiger, *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).
3. See Robert H. Pope, "New England Versus the New England Mind: The Myth of Deconversion," *Journal of Social History* 3 (1969): 95-108.
4. Nathan Bangs, *The Present State, Prospects, and Responsibilities of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1850), 72.
5. On croakers see especially John H. Wigger, *Taking Heaven by Storm: Methodism and the Rise of Popular Christianity in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 180-90.
6. This typology derives from the literature on the history of ministry, some of which is cited in note 1 above.
7. The formulation is from Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town, The First Hundred Years* (New York: Norton, 1970), 16.
8. There is a considerable literature now on the relation of the Great Awakening to the Revolution. See Harry S. Stout, "Religion, Communications, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 34 (1977): 519-41. Mark Noll summarized the arguments in *Christians in the American Revolution* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1977).
9. On the American as booster see Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1965), 113ff.
10. I have been aided in my analysis by L. Dale Patterson, "The Ministerial Mind of American Methodism: The Course of Study for the Ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Protestant Church, 1876-1920" (PhD diss., Drew University, 1984).
11. Adam Clarke, *The Preacher's Manual: Including Claris Biblica, or a Compendium of Scriptural Knowledge; and his Letter to a Methodist Preacher on His Entrance into the Work of Ministry; and also Dr. Coke's Four Discourses on the Duties of a Minister of the Gospel* (New York: Bangs & Mason, 1821), 132-33.
12. Matthew Simpson, *Lectures on Preaching* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1879), 271-72.
13. Nolan B. Harmon, *Ministerial Ethics and Etiquette* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1928); Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (New York: Abingdon, 1958); John R. Spann, ed., *The Ministry* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1949).
14. Ino. J. Tigert, *A Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism*, 3rd ed., rev. (Nashville: Publishing House of the MECS, 1908), Appendix VII (pp. 532-602) reproduces the 1785 *Discipline* and "The Large Minutes of 1780" in parallel columns, showing thereby the near total reliance of the American on the Wesleyan model.
15. *A Form of Discipline, For the Ministers, Preachers and Member(s) of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America* (New York: W. Ross, 1787), 12-13.
16. The combination of these two publications in a single volume seems to be an American venture. See Kenneth E. Rowe, *Methodist Union Catalog: Pre-1976 Imprints* (Metuchen: Scarcrow Press, 1975-), 386-87 for its numerous printings. Both items went through a number of editions and enjoyed several American printings. Clarke's *A Letter to a Preacher* was printed in London in 1800 and went through five British editions, and was published in America in 1816, 1819, and 1820. Thereafter it appeared in America as part of *The Preacher's Manual*, Coke's *Four Discourses on the Duties of a Ministry of the Gospel* was published in both London and Philadelphia in 1798, and again in London in 1820.
17. Clark, *Preacher's Manual*, 76.
18. *Ibid.*, 106-8.
19. *Ibid.*, 172.

20. *Ibid.*, 175.
21. *Ibid.*, 141.
22. *Ibid.*, 142.
23. *Ibid.*, 172.
24. Nathan Bangs, *An Original Church of Christ* (New York: Mason & Lane, 1837), 366.
25. Nathan Bangs, *The Present State, Prospects, and Responsibilities of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Lane & Scott, 1850), 72-73.
26. *Ibid.*, 75.
27. *Ibid.*, 76.
28. Randolph S. Foster, *A Treatise on the Need of the M. E. Church with Respect to Her Ministry* (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1855), 22.
29. *Ibid.*, 22-24, 26.
30. Alfred Brunson, *The Gospel Ministry: Its Characteristics and Qualifications* (New York: for the author, 1856), 26-27.
31. *Ibid.*, 28.
32. See Howard A. Snyder, *Populist Saints: B. T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).
33. Simpson, *Lectures*, 11.
34. William A. Quayle, *The Pastor-Preacher* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1910), 9-11.
35. *Ibid.*, 12.
36. *Ibid.*, 35.
37. *Ibid.*, 61.
38. Lynn Harold Hough, *The Theology of a Preacher* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1912), 12-13.
39. Washington Gladden, *The Christian Pastor and The Working Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898).
40. Francis John McConnell, *The Preacher and the People* (New York: Abingdon, 1922).
41. James A. Beebe, *The Pastoral Office: An Introduction to the Work of a Pastor* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1923), 184.
42. G. Bromley Oxnam, *Preaching and the Social Crisis* (New York: Abingdon, 1933), and *Preaching in a Revolutionary Age* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1944).
43. Beebe, *Pastoral Office*, 136.
44. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper, 1956).
45. *Ibid.*, 58.
46. Gibson Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1961).

4. DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENCY: A RECONSIDERATION

1. On the notion of *episkopé* as oversight, see "The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement," *Faith and Order Paper No. 181* (World Council of Churches, November 1998), <http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=2638>.

Oversight: Communal, Personal and Collegial

The Church as the body of Christ and the eschatological people of God is built up by the Holy Spirit through a diversity of gifts or ministries. Among these gifts a ministry of *episkopé* (oversight) serves to express and promote the visible unity of the body. Every church needs this ministry of unity in some form.

The 17 paragraphs that follow develop the various dimensions of episcopal oversight. See also section III, "The Forms of the Ordained Ministry," *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith and Order Paper No. 111; World Council of Churches, 1982), <http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=2638>.

2. John and Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (Bristol: Farley, 1742), 283-84, available online at: http://www.divinity.duke.edu/wesleyan/texts/cw_published_verse.html.
3. Gil Rendle, "Finding the Path in the Wilderness: Middle Judicatory Case Studies and Learnings" (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2001), 11. Rendle quotes a Presbyterian synod executive as saying, "the governing mission of synods is now to enhance the ministries of presbyteries and their congregations as the places where real ministry takes place" (p. 5).
4. On this point, see Russell E. Richey, *The Methodist Conference in America: A History* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1996), particularly 159-68; and Richey et al., "Are the Local Church and Denominational Bureaucracy 'Twins?' in Questions for the Twenty-First Century Church" (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 232-41. Another chapter in the same volume, "Are Extension Ministries an Opportunity to Reclaim a Wesleyan Understanding of Mission," 175-85, pertains to the argument of this chapter as a whole. On the localizing trend in Methodism, see also Thomas Edward Frank, *Polity, Practice and the Mission of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006).
5. See the discussion below and also Richey, *Methodist Conference*, 39-42, 59-61; and Richey, *Early American Methodism*, 21-32; see also Lester Ruth, *A Little Heaven Below: Worship at Early American Methodist Quarterly Meetings* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2000); and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, *American Methodist Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
6. Richey, *Methodist Conference*.
7. The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church, *Vital Congregations, Faithful Disciples: Vision for the Church* (Nashville: General Board of Discipleship, 1990).
8. *Church, Identity, and Change: Theology and Denominational Structures in Unsettled Times*, ed. David A. Roozen and James Nieman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). Online: <http://www.religion-research.org/UMR/mainHTML/introduction.html>
9. "Leadership and Servanthood: Episcopacy and District Superintendency in The United Methodist Church," Report, Recommendations, and Proposed Legislation of the 1972-76 Quadrennial Commission for the Study of the Offices of Bishop and District Superintendent. The United Methodist Church, *Daily Christian Advocate*, Advance Edition F, vol. IV, April 27, 1976, pp. F-1 to F-61.
10. Gerald Moede, *The Office of Bishop in Methodism: Its History and Development* (Zürich: Gotthelf, 1964; New York: Abingdon, 1965); Murray H. Leiffer, *The District Superintendent in the United Methodist Church* (Evanston: Garrett Theological Seminary, 1971); and Leiffer, *What District Superintendents Say—About Their Office and the Issues Confronting Them* (Evanston: Garrett Theological Seminary, 1972). Also underlying the quadrennial study was the work of a prior quadrennium, "The Study of the General Superintendency of the Methodist Church," which issued a three-volume preliminary report in 1963 and reported to General Conference in 1964. Part III of the 1963 draft attended to the "Relation of the Episcopacy to the District Superintendency."
11. Egon W. Gerdes, *Informed Ministry: Theological Reflections on the Practice of Ministry in Methodism* (Zürich: Publishing House of the UMC, 1976).
12. Emora Thomas Brannan, "The Presiding Elder Question: Its Critical Nature in American Methodism, 1820-1824 and its Impact upon Ecclesiastical Institutions" (PhD diss., Duke University, 1974); and Fred W. Price, "The Role of the Presiding Elder in the Growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1784-1832" (PhD diss., Drew University, 1984).
13. In addition to the two volumes cited in note 10 above, see Murray H. Leiffer, *The Role of the District Superintendent in the Methodist Church* (Evanston, IL: Garrett Theological Seminary, 1960).
14. Leiffer, *What District Superintendents Say*, 52-58.
15. *Methodist Episcopal Church, The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, with Explanatory Notes*, by Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury (Philadelphia, 1798); facsimile edition, ed. Frederick A. Norwood (Rutland, VT: Academy Books, 1979), (1798), 46-47.
16. *Ibid.*, 53. See the Appendix to this chapter for the full text of this Disciplinary section and of the commentary thereon by Coke and Asbury.