

---

# PART 1

## BASIC PRINCIPLES

### Chapter 1

### HISTORY

#### A. The Origin of the Wesleyan Movement

1. The Wesleyan movement centers around the scriptural truth concerning the doctrine and experience of holiness, which declares that the atonement in Christ provides not only for the regeneration of sinners but for the entire sanctification of believers. A revival of these scriptural truths concerning Christian perfection and scriptural holiness took place under the leadership of John Wesley in the eighteenth century, and continues in various ways until the present.

2. Nurtured in a devout home, John Wesley committed himself to a search after God from earliest childhood. While at Oxford, together with his brother Charles and a few other serious-minded collegians, he methodically pursued holiness through systematic Bible study, prayer, good works, intensive examination, and reproof. The group earned the nicknames of the “Holy Club” and of “Methodists,” but Wesley did not earn the assurance of salvation. Having graduated from Oxford, and having been ordained as a clergyman in the state church, he intensified his search for peace through legalism and self-discipline. The turning point came at a prayer meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, May 24, 1738, when he perceived the way of faith and found his heart “strangely warmed” in the new birth. As he went on to the experience of entire sanctification, he shared his testimony and teaching with others, and a spiritual awakening spread across the British Isles and to America.

3. It was not Wesley’s purpose to found a church, but the awakening brought about the spontaneous origin of the “societies” which grew into the Methodist movement. Near the end of 1739, there came to Wesley, in London, eight or ten persons who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired, as did two or three more the next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. A day was appointed when they might all come together, which from thence forward they did every week; namely, on

Thursday in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily), he gave those advices which he judged most needful for them and they always concluded their meeting with prayer. The Covenant Membership Commitments found in this *Discipline* (260-268) represent in revised form the General Rules which Wesley gave to the members of the societies to enable them to test the sincerity of their purpose and to guide them in holy living.

4. The movement spread to America by the emigration of Methodists, who, beginning in 1766, began to organize the Methodist “classes” and “societies” in the colonies. In December 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized at the Christmas Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. The new church experienced a miraculous growth, especially on the frontier, and quickly became one of the major religious forces in the new nation.

### **B. The Organization of The Wesleyan Methodist Connection**

6. John Wesley and the early Methodist leaders in America had been uncompromising in their denunciation of human slavery. But with the invention of the cotton gin, the economic advantages of slavery involved many ministers and members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in slaveholding. When a group of ministers in the New England Conference, led by Orange Scott, began to agitate anew for the abolition of slavery, the bishops and others in the church sought to silence them lest the peace of the church be disturbed.

7. The inward compulsion of truth met by the outward compulsion of ecclesiastical authority led to a series of withdrawal of churches and ministers from the Methodist Episcopal Church. The earliest extensive withdrawal was in Michigan, and led on May 13, 1841, to the formation of the annual conference using the name, “The Wesleyan Methodist Church.” The withdrawal which had the most far-reaching consequences occurred in New England and New York late in 1842. In November 1842, Orange Scott, Jotham Horton, and LaRoy Sunderland withdrew, publishing their reasons in the first issue of *The True Wesleyan*, and they were joined in the following month by Luther Lee and Lucius C. Matlack. A call was issued to those interested in the ultimate formation of a new church, free from episcopacy and slavery, to meet at Andover, Massachusetts, February 1, 1843. At Andover a call was issued for an organizing convention.

8. The organizing convention for the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America was held at Utica, New York, May 31 to June 8, 1843. The new

organization was a “Connection” of local churches organized in annual conferences. It avoided the episcopacy, and provided for equal ministerial and lay representation in all of its governing bodies. Moral and social reform were strongly emphasized, with slaveholding and all involvements with intoxicating liquors being prohibited.

### **C. The Revival of the Wesleyan Experience**

**11.** The Wesleyan Methodist Connection saw the crusade against slavery carried to a conclusion in the Civil War. Afterwards, many felt there was no reason for the Connection as such to continue, and returned to the larger Methodist bodies. Others felt, as was expressed by the 1867 General Conference, that the effects of slavery were not yet eradicated, and that the historic stand against intoxicating liquors, and the increasingly firm stand against lodges and secret societies, could only be maintained by the continued existence and activity of the Connection.

**12.** At its first General Conference in 1844, the Connection had adopted an article of religion on “Sanctification,” becoming the first denomination to do so. But the doctrine and experience suffered neglect and decline among all branches of Methodism in the mid-nineteenth century. To renew them, God raised up a revival of holiness promoted through literature, evangelistic meetings, and camp meetings that swept throughout Methodism and across denominational lines. The first national camp meeting, which developed into the National Holiness Association, was held in 1867. The revival led to the establishment of several new holiness denominations and to the renewing and redirecting of others.

**13.** This spiritual revival, promoted vigorously by a corps of itinerant evangelists, soon established holiness as the major tenet of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection, which had formerly majored on social and political reform. In 1883, the General Conference adopted a resolution requiring the preaching of entire sanctification, and by 1893 new articles of religion on regeneration and entire sanctification had been adopted by the General Conference, the annual conferences, and local churches.

### **D. The Development of The Wesleyan Methodist Church**

**16.** The revival of holiness which swept the Wesleyan Methodist Connection introduced a new emphasis on evangelism. The need for organized efforts of church extension and the need to conserve converts led to

the gradual development of a more formal organization as a church rather than a connection. In 1891, the name was changed to the *Wesleyan Methodist Connection (or Church) of America*, and the denomination moved beyond a leadership largely confined to publications (editor and publisher) to elect a general missionary superintendent. Gradually other departmental executives were added. In 1947, the name was changed to *The Wesleyan Methodist Church of America*, and a central supervisory authority was established with the general conference president as the full-time leader of the denomination, and the Board of Administration as the central and coordinating board of control. In 1957, the denominational headquarters was moved from Syracuse, New York, where it had been for over a century, to Marion, Indiana. In 1959, the plan for a general conference president was superseded by one calling for three general superintendents.

17. Various ministers and local churches affiliated themselves with The Wesleyan Methodist Church at different times throughout its history. But its home base and missionary work were appreciably augmented by the affiliation of three organizations.

(1) *The Hephzibah Faith Missionary Society* was organized in 1893 and eventually established headquarters at Tabor, Iowa. Some of its ministers and churches in Nebraska, its Brainerd Indian School near Hot Springs, South Dakota, and its mission field in Haiti became part of The Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1948.

(2) *The Missionary Bands of the World*, organized in 1885 as the Pentecost Bands, an auxiliary of the Free Methodist Church, became a separate organization in 1895, changed names in 1925, and in 1958 merged its churches in Indiana and its mission fields in central India and Jamaica with The Wesleyan Methodist Church.

(3) *The Alliance of the Reformed Baptist Church of Canada* was organized in 1888 as the result of the sanctification of several Baptist ministers. In 1966 it merged its churches in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Maine, and its mission fields in Africa with The Wesleyan Methodist Church.

18. The Wesleyan Methodist Church became international with its spread to Canada, and the establishment, development, and acquisition through merger of mission fields in Sierra Leone, India, Colombia, Japan, Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Mexico, Taiwan, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Nepal, Rhodesia, and South Africa.

### E. The Formation and Development of The Pilgrim Holiness Church

23. The Pilgrim Holiness Church came into being as a result of the revival of scriptural holiness that swept across the various denominations in America in the last half of the nineteenth century, the same awakening that had rechanneled the energies of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection from social and political reform to holiness evangelism (12-13). The awakening crystallized in the establishment of many nondenominational and interdenominational holiness unions and associations and independent churches. Toward the close of the nineteenth century many of like precious faith began to draw together in the unity of the Spirit.

24. A focal point for the beginning of The Pilgrim Holiness Church as an organization was the formation of the *International Holiness Union and Prayer League* in September 1897, at Cincinnati, Ohio, in the home of Martin Wells Knapp. Rev. Seth C. Rees was chosen President, and Rev. Martin Wells Knapp, Vice-President. The Union was not thought of as a church, nor intended as such, but was an interdenominational fellowship, marked by simplicity and the absence of restrictions. The primary purpose of the Union was to unite holiness people in promoting worldwide holiness evangelism. A fourfold emphasis was declared concerning the regeneration of sinners, the entire sanctification of believers, the premillennial and imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the evangelization of the world. The Union met the need of many people for fellowship and cooperation in the spread of scriptural holiness and grew rapidly. Extensive revival work was carried on by members of the Union, resulting in the formation of many city missions, churches, rescue homes, and camp meetings.

25. In the annual meeting of the Union held in July 1900, the name was changed to *International Apostolic Holiness Union* in order to express more fully the aim of promoting a return to apostolic principles and practices. Also in 1900 the foreign missionary work began as members of the Union went out as faith missionaries to South Africa, India, Japan, the West Indies, and South America.

26. The Union gradually developed into a church organization in order to provide church homes for the converts and the conservation of the work. In 1905 the name was changed to *International Apostolic Holiness Union and Churches*. The interdenominational features also faded out, and in 1913 the name was altered to *International Apostolic Holiness Church*.

27. In 1919, the Indiana, Illinois-Missouri, and Kansas-Oklahoma

Conferences of the *Holiness Christian Church* were received by the *General Assembly of the International Apostolic Holiness Church*. The Holiness Christian Church had its beginning in a revival movement around Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1882, and was organized at Linwood, Pennsylvania, in 1889 as the *Holiness Christian Association*. By 1919 it was known as the Holiness Christian Church and was composed of four conferences; it also sponsored a missionary work in Central America.

**28.** *The Pentecostal Rescue Mission* joined the International Holiness Church in March 1922, and became the New York District. It had originated at Binghamton, New York, in 1897, and had spread until it included missions, rescue work, camp meetings, orphanage activities, churches, and a missionary work in Alaska.

**29.** In October 1922, the General Assembly, in special session, received *The Pilgrim Church of California* and adopted the name, *The Pilgrim Holiness Church*. The Pilgrim Church was first organized on May 27, 1917, as the *Pentecost-Pilgrim Church* in Pasadena, California. By 1922, a school known as Pilgrim Bible School had been established and a periodical was being published at Pasadena, California, and missionaries had been sent out to Mexico.

**30.** In 1924, a group of several churches known as the *Pentecostal Brethren in Christ* united with and became a part of the Ohio District of The Pilgrim Holiness Church.

**31.** In 1925, *The People's Mission Church*, with headquarters at Colorado Springs, Colorado, became a part of The Pilgrim Holiness Church. It was the outgrowth of revival work that began in 1898 in Colorado Springs and spread through several surrounding states. A Bible school was operated, a periodical published, and a camp meeting maintained at Colorado Springs.

**32.** In 1946, *The Holiness Church of California* was received by the General Conference into The Pilgrim Holiness Church. This Church, which began in a revival movement in 1880 and was first known as The Holiness Bands, maintained a Bible school at El Monte, California, and a growing missionary work in Peru and Palestine.

**33.** *The Africa Evangelistic Mission*, with headquarters at Boksburg, Transvaal, South Africa, was received by The Pilgrim Holiness Church in 1962. The Mission carried on work organized into three districts, two of which were located in the Orange Free State and Transvaal in the Republic of South Africa, and a third district comprising extensive work in Mozambique.

**34.** The growth of The Pilgrim Holiness Church continued through revival work and evangelism in greater measure than by the uniting of other

bodies. An important turning point in the organizational structure was reached in 1930 when the General Assembly unified the administration of the denomination by providing for one general superintendent, one general board, and a general headquarters at Indianapolis, Indiana. In 1958 a plan for three general superintendents was inaugurated. In 1962 the General Conference, known until 1942 as the General Assembly, was designated as the International Conference in recognition of the growth and development of the overseas work.

**35.** The original purpose of the founders of The Pilgrim Holiness Church to promote worldwide holiness evangelism remained an indelible characteristic. Missionary work was carried on in many lands, and The Pilgrim Holiness Church extended beyond the United States and Canada to the following places: South Africa, including Natal, Transvaal, Cape Province, and Orange Free State; Swaziland; Mozambique; Zambia; the Caribbean area, including Grand Cayman, Jamaica, St. Croix, St. Thomas, Saba, St. Kitts, Nevis, Antigua, Barbuda, Barbados, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, and Curacao; Guyana; Suriname; Brazil; Peru; Mexico; Philippine Islands; and England.

## F. The Formation of The Wesleyan Church

**50.** Merger between The Pilgrim Holiness Church and The Wesleyan Methodist Church of America was proposed at various times, and was voted upon by the General Conferences of the two bodies in 1958 and 1959, failing to pass in the Wesleyan Methodist General Conference by a margin of a single vote. In 1962, the General Conference of The Pilgrim Holiness Church took action expressing renewed interest in union with The Wesleyan Methodist Church. In 1963, the General Conference of The Wesleyan Methodist Church took like action, instructing its Committee on Church Union to pursue its work with all due diligence. On June 15, 1966, the Thirty-Second General Conference of The Wesleyan Methodist Church adopted The Basis for Merger and Constitution, and subsequently the annual conferences and local churches ratified the action. On June 16, 1966, the Twenty-Fifth International Conference of The Pilgrim Holiness Church also adopted The Basis for Merger and Constitution. Thus the formation of *The Wesleyan Church* was authorized. The General Board of The Pilgrim Holiness Church and the General Board of Administration of The Wesleyan Methodist Church cooperated in planning the uniting General Conference, and in preparing the new book of *Discipline* for its consideration. On June 26, 1968, The Pilgrim

Holiness Church and The Wesleyan Methodist Church of America were united to form The Wesleyan Church.

### **G. The Development of the World Organization**

**60.** The merging General Conference provided tentatively for the development of the overseas churches into national or regional general conferences, as they matured and qualified for such status. As a result, the General Board of Administration appointed a World Organization Planning Committee. Its work led to a meeting of mission coordinators and national representatives from around the world in the World Organization Planning Conference, June 6-9, 1972, prior to the Second General Conference. The Planning Conference recommended setting apart those portions of the Constitution which contained the name, doctrines, and standards of conduct plus some new organizational articles, as the Essentials of The Wesleyan Church, which would be binding upon all General Conferences of The Wesleyan Church. It recommended the formation of a Wesleyan World Fellowship governed by a Charter, functioning through a General Council, with eventually an International Board of Review assisting in maintaining faithfulness to the Essentials. The entire plan was approved by the 1972 General Conference, and subsequently the members of the World Organization Planning Conference effected the organization of the General Council.

**65.** During the following quadrennium two provisional general conferences, one step short of full status, were formed. The Caribbean Provisional General Conference was organized April 3, 1974, and the Provisional General Conference of the Philippines was organized April 22-23, 1975. The 1984 General Conference incorporated the Essentials in the Charter as an historic statement of faith with which all disciplines must agree. On June 20, 1988, the General Conference approved the elevation of The Wesleyan Church of the Philippines to full standing equivalent to that of the North American General Conference, providing for the formation of the International Board of Review. On June 21, 2004, the North American General Conference approved the elevation of The Wesleyan Holiness Church of the Caribbean to full General Conference standing. This coincided with the restructuring of The Wesleyan World Fellowship as The International Conference of The Wesleyan Church.

## H. Official Church Names

**80.** The following are the official names of the various units of The Wesleyan Church. Included are those whose adaptation of the name have been approved in keeping with the provisions of 205 and 340:2. These are printed for information only. Changes may be authorized when necessary by the General Board (340:2; 1655:31).

Australia: *The Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia*

Bougainville: *The Wesleyan Methodist Church of Bougainville*

Brazil: *Igreja Evangelica Wesleyana*

British Isles: *The Wesleyan Holiness Church*

Caribbean: (cf. 2565) *The Wesleyan Holiness Church of the Caribbean*

Chile: *Ministerio Evangelistico y Misionero "Cristo es la Unica Respuesta"*

Colombia: (cf. 2561) *La Iglesia Wesleyana de Colombia*

Costa Rica: *Iglesia Wesleyana Internacional de Costa Rica*

Egypt: *The Standard Wesleyan Church*

Ghana: *The Standard Wesleyan Church*

Guyana: *The Wesleyan Church*

Haiti: *L'Eglise Wesleyenne d'Haiti*

Honduras: *Mision Metodista Sion*

India, Central: *The Wesleyan Methodist Church of Central India*

India, East: *The Wesleyan Methodist Church of East India*

India, Western: *The Wesleyan Methodist Church of Western India*

Indonesia: *Yayasan Gereja Wesleyan Indonesia*

Liberia: *The Wesleyan Church of Liberia*

Mexico: *Iglesia Evangélica de los Peregrinos*

Mozambique: *Igreja Emmanuel Evangelica Wesleyana*

Myanmar: *The Wesleyan Methodist Church*

New Zealand: *Wesleyan Methodist Church of New Zealand*

Nicaragua: *Asociación Mundial de Iglesias Wesleyanas de Nicaragua*

Peru: *Iglesia Wesleyana Peregrina*

Philippines (cf. 2560): *The Wesleyan Church of the Philippines*

Puerto Rico: *Iglesia Evangélica Wesleyana*

Sierra Leone: *The Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone*

South Korea: *Jesus Korea Wesleyan Church*

South Africa: *The Wesleyan Church of Southern Africa*

Suriname: *De Wesleyaanse Gemeente*

United States and Canada: *The Wesleyan Church*

Venezuela: *Iglesia Evangélica Wesleyana*

Zambia: *Pilgrim Wesleyan Church of Zambia*

Zimbabwe: *The Wesleyan Church*