History itself is hard enough to come by. Its data must of necessity be selective. Sometimes there are too few of them to obtain an adequate understanding of what happened at the particular place and time under consideration. Much more often, especially in modern times, there are too many of them properly to handle, and details blur one's perspective, so that he cannot make out the shape of the forest because of the endless number of trees which compose it.

Except for the arts (and I mean by these the fine arts, both the static ones of architecture, sculpture, and painting and the dynamic ones of music, poetry, and drama), there is no more subjective an enterprise in the entire range of human endeavor than history. The predilection of the historian governs to a remarkable degree the history he writes. This is obvious of course when we compartmentalize history in terms of economics, science, literature, the arts, religion, philosophy, and even philology, or language itself. But there is always a subtle but equally determinative intrusion of the personality of the historian into his history within categories, so that the economic history of Marx is quite different from that of Adam Smith, and one would have difficulty, except for the names of the persons involved and the doctrines under consideration, recognizing Harnack's and Seeberg's histories of Christian doctrine as dealing with the same areas of historical concern.

Rudolph Bultmann puts this poignantly when he writes: "Therefore the relation of subject and object which is characteristic of natural science has no value for historical science. Historical science is objective precisely in its subjectivity because the subject and object of historical science do not exist independently of one another... from this it follows that historical knowledge is itself a historical event or a stage in the historical process within which the historian himself is interwoven as well as the object which he endeavors to know. Therefore the results of his research are not ultimate statements.... There is no end or goal in the process of historical knowledge anymore than in the process of history itself."¹ Gibbon's literary classic, The Decline

and Fall of the Roman Empire, was written again by others almost as soon as it was published, and it is still being written again and again as subsequent generations bring their talents and industry to this important theme. "Every new generation," says Collingwood, "must rewrite history in its own way; every new historian, not content with giving new answers to old questions, must revise the questions themselves."  

If history itself is so difficult to come by, then the philosophy of history seems a futile task to undertake, and those who would leave a name for themselves by attempting to give meaning to the sequence of temporal events and the deeds of humankind would appear to carve on ice or write on sand.

The Greeks, who in the context of Western civilization invented philosophy as an intellectual discipline and developed it to the highest level of perfectibility so that in Plato and Aristotle they have not yet been surpassed or, as most would say, even equaled, did not attempt to construct a philosophy of history. They produced three great historians, one of whom is traditionally known as "the father of history." But they were content to find out as best they could what happened in the past and to tell the story of former times. Even in this, they were modest and self-contained. They limited their research to their own people and the doings of others only to the extent that they were directly involved with theirs. Thus the first Greek history opens with the statement: "These are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which he publishes in the hope of thereby preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the Barbarians from losing their due meed of glory; and withal to put on record what were their grounds of feud." And Xenophon closes the Hellenica by writing: "The effective result of these achievements was the very opposite of that which the world at large anticipated. Here, where well-nigh the whole of Hellas was met together in one field, and the combatants stood rank against rank confronted, there was no one who doubted that, in the event of battle, the conquerors of this day would rule; and those who lost would be their subjects. But God so ordained

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it that both beligerents alike set up trophies as claiming victory, and neither interfered with the other in the act. Both parties alike gave back their enemies dead under a truce, as in right of victory; both alike, in symbol of defeat, under a truce took back their dead. And though both claimed to have won the day, neither could show that he had thereby gained any accession of territory, or state, or empire, or was better situated than before the battle. Uncertainty and confusion, indeed, had gained ground, being ten fold greater throughout the length and breadth of Hellas after the battle than before. At this point," Xenophon writes despairingly, "I lay aside my pen: the sequel of the story may hopefully commend itself to another."4

The concern for universal, or world, history emerged with the institutionalization of Christianity and the organization of the church as a permanent institution in what the Christians believed to be an impermanent society. This concern did not arise immediately with the advent of Christianity. Luke, for example, was as particular and parochial in his historicizing as had been the Greeks, whose language he adopted and whose style he imitated, for in all probability he was a Greek himself. "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." (Acts 1:1.) If his gospel is delimited to the earthly career of the Saviour, then the Acts of the Apostles begins with Peter and ends with Paul and is confined to a very particular and definite span of events. It was the Constantinian era at the opening of the fourth century when the effort was first made to place Christianity in a universal setting and to show that the history of the particular cannot go unrelated to the history of the whole. With Eusebius of Caesarea the concern for world history is registered as a scholarly enterprise for the first time.5 Before he began his Ecclesiastical History, he had written his Chronicle and attempted to show that Christianity is a continuance of the religion of the Old Testament, whose prophets and seers flourished long before the most celebrated philosophers of other ancient ideologies.6

4 Xenophon, Hellenica, Vol. VII, Ch. 5, 22-25, 27.
5 Bultmann, op.cit., p. 57
Likewise, the philosophy of history, which the Greeks would have eschewed as a stumbling block to their intellectual pursuits and which the early Christians would have laughed at as foolishness, the church estab-
lished as a legitimate enterprise and employed as a worthwhile apologetic for her evangel. After all, as time went by since the events of the Resurrection and Pentecost and as the church herself began to gather years as a historical institution, it was only natural for her to acquire an interest in history which she was in the process of making. Eusebius of Caesarea is as much the father of general church history as Herodotus is the father of Greek history and the various narrators of the Pentateuch are of the history of the Hebrew people, whose story they tell. He himself recognized this and laid claim to the title when he wrote: "But at this point my account asks for the indulgence of the reasonable,...since we are the first to enter upon the undertaking, attempting as it were, to travel a deserted and untrodden road,...being unable to discover anywhere even the bare tracks of those who travelled the same path before us, except only for the brief remarks through which in one way or another they have left us partial accounts of the times in which they lived, raising their voices like torches from afar and crying out from on high as from a distant and lofty watchtower, bidding us how we must walk and keep straight the course of our story without error and danger."7

It is one thing to write history. It is quite another to divine meaning and purpose in the history we have attempted to recount. "Men wise and more learned than I," wrote H. A. F. Fisher, "have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a predetermined pattern." But then he was honest enough to confess, "These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave, only one safe rule for this historian, that he shall rec-
ognize in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen."

The New Testament, though its authors employed his-
tory by taking incidents from it to enforce their lessons and wrote history, too, by telling the story of Jesus and his earliest followers, does not reflect upon

history to the extent of trying to philosophize about it or of seeking in its development ultimate meaning as a separate and distinct category in its basic theology. The writers of the New Testament were too eager to be done with history for them to spend much time with it. When Paul, for example, looks back on the Old Testament, he sees its contents as evidence of sin and judgment and of the desperate need for divine grace. The Apostle John is more concerned about the new Jerusalem than he is the old, and what comes down from God out of heaven is vastly more important than anything made by man that it displaces on earth. The New Testament is obsessed with eschatology. For it the end of history is the glorious manifestation of the complete triumph of Christ, the promise of which was announced by the Resurrection. The earliest Christians were dominated by the anticipation of Parousia, the glorious return of Christ when he would gather them up to himself with his saints in glory.

This same concern was a dominant force in the evangelical career of John Wesley and therefore a basic motif in his theology. He was always more interested in heaven than he was in earth. Before Aldersgate, he was constantly afraid that he would not get there and was anxiously concerned that he might find the way. After Aldersgate, the burden of his ministry was to help others into heaven, though to be sure he never excluded himself from their company on their way in. Unlike Moses, he showed no paternal disposition to have his name blotted out of the Lord God's book if it took that in order for his people to obtain forgiveness and live. (Exodus 32:32.)

This is clearly shown in the long letter he wrote his father from Oxford on December 10, 1734, in which he declines his father's request that he come back to Epworth as his curate. "For how is it possible," he writes, "that the good God should make our interest inconsistent with our neighbor's? That he should make our being in one state best for ourselves, and our being in another best for the church? This would be making a strange schism in his body; such as surely never was from the beginning of the world. And if not, then whatever state is best on either of these accounts is so in the other likewise. If it is best for others, then it is so for us; if for us, then for them."

"However," Wesley goes on to say, "when two ways of life are proposed, I should choose to begin with that part of the question, which of those have I rational
ground to believe will combine most to my own improvement? And that not only because it is every physician's concern to heal himself first, but because it seems we may judge with more ease, and perhaps certainty too, in which state we can most promote holiness in ourselves than in which we can promote it in others...From all this I conclude that, when I am most holy myself, then I could most promote holiness in others; and consequently I could most promote it here than in any other place under heaven."

His father had written his son that Epworth, to use his words, "is yet a larger sphere of action than this; there I should have the care of two thousand souls." To which John replied, "Two thousand souls! I see not how any man living can take care of an hundred. At least I could not; I know too well quid valeant humeri (how much I can bear). Because the weight that I already have upon me is almost more than I am able to bear, ought I to increase it tenfold? Would this be the way either to help myself or my brothers up to heaven? Nay; but the mountains I reared would only crush my own soul, and so make me utterly useless to others."

This over-mastering zeal for heaven is expressed in the preface Wesley wrote to the collection he made of his sermons and published as the substance of the doctrines he embraced and taught as the essentials of true religion. "To candid, reasonable men," he wrote, "I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought: I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God and returning to God: just hovering over the great gulf till, a few moments hence, I am no more seen, I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing: the way to heaven, how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! at any price, give me the book of God! I have it; here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be homo unius libri (a man of only one book). Here then I am, far from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone—only God is here. In his presence I open, I

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9 Sermons on Several Occasions, 1746 Ed., Preface 1.
Mr. Wesley went on to say: "I have accordingly set down in the following sermons what I find in the Bible concerning the way to heaven, with a view to distinguish the way of God from all those which are the inventions of men. I have endeavored to describe the true, the scriptural, experimental religion, so as to omit nothing which is a real part thereof and to add nothing thereto which is not. And herein it is more especially my desire, first, to guard those who are just setting their faces toward heaven (and who, having little acquaintance with the things of God, are the more liable to be turned out of the way) from formality, from mere outward religion which has almost driven heart religion out of the world; and secondly, to warn those who know the religion of the heart, 'the faith which worketh by love,' lest at any time they make void the law through faith and so fall back into the snares of the devil." It would appear from this preface that most all of Wesley's teaching and preaching was directed toward the world to come, so that little was left for the issues of the world which now is and in which his ministry was performed.

Indeed, when Wesley prepared The Rules of the United Societies, known now as The General Rules, he offered them as the regulations for "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation." This early organization which developed into the various Methodist churches was designed to help people "flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads." All this leads us to assume that John Wesley was a throwback to primitive Christianity, that eschatology dominated his religious thinking just as completely as it had the writers of the New Testament, and that his only concern was the imminent second coming of Jesus, which had preoccupied the thought of the Apostle Paul in his early ministry as an evangelist and missionary and also even as a theologian.

10 Ibid., 5.
11 Ibid., 6.
12 General Rules, 2.
13 Ibid., 1.
But this is not the case at all. The difference between Wesley and the early Christians was seventeen hundred years of Christian history. The church had been around that long. There was her own distinctive history to take into account. And there was also the history of other institutions, of society in general, and of western civilization in particular which she had helped to make. No educated son of the eighteenth century could disregard this. Nor could any theologian as cultivated and sensitive as John Wesley fail to employ it in the advancement of his own religious thought. To be sure, he was always inordinately concerned about heaven, and the life to come was evermore important for him than the life that now is; but he was no apocalyptic or millenarian, either "pre" or "post"; and the heaven he yearned for was altogether dependent in its attainment on what happened in this present world he was anxious to escape from. Like the Apostle Paul, he claimed his citizenship to be in heaven, but no one in modern times worked any harder in and for this earthly land in which he resided as an alien and sojourner than did John Wesley.

There are at least six doctrines which Wesley contended were absolutely essential in Christian theology. They are the Trinity, the deity of Christ, original sin, the atonement, justification by faith alone, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Out of these he formed what may best be styled the anatomy of history, the skeleton of which is creation, the fall, the universality of evil, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, the universal scope of the atonement, the claim on and application of its benefits by faith in the heart of the believer through the work of the Holy Spirit in his life.

Creation is God's handiwork uncompromised by any factor or circumstance outside his own being. He made everything that was made to please himself. "As creator," wrote Wesley, "God could not but act according to his sovereign will."14 This means that the general movement of events in time, the sequential course of human affairs, is as much a part of the overall creative design as the stars, the moon, and the sun in the heavens, the earth in its orbit, and the six continents and seven seas, which give the earth its geographical contour. In other words, God ordained history when he ordained the world as a stage for its enactment and people and collections of people who would be the players who enact its drama.

14 Journal, Saturday, June 15, 1777.
All that God made in the beginning was good, for it re-
lected his character and personality. Creation, ac-
cording to Wesley, "was good to the highest degree whereof it was capable, and without any mixture of evil. Every part was exactly suited to the others, and conducive to the good of the whole. There was a 'golden chain' (to use the expression of Plato) 'let down from the throne of God.' An exactly connected series of beings, from the highest to the lowest; from dead earth, through fossils, vegetables, to man, created in the image of God, and designed to know, to love, and to enjoy his Creator to all eternity."15 This means, too, that history as God originally intended it was to have been a chronology of splendid attainments, grand and noble deeds performed by various peoples, cultures of sundry types vying with one another in excellence, and many civilizations reflecting the perfection of the Kingdom of God.

But God's good intentions were interrupted by man's evil deeds. The fall was an historical event the con-
sequences of which, themselves historical as well, have corrupted history, and to a degree even nature, the environment of history, and continue to corrupt it in the very process of its being made. Man is perpetually victimized by his own sins and by the sins of others. "Look out of your own door; 'Is there any evil in the city, and 'sin' hath not done it?' Is there any mis-
fortune or misery to be named whereof it is not either the direct or remote occasion? Why is it that the friend or relative for whom you are as tenderly concerned is indeed in so many troubles? Have you not done your part toward making them happy? Yes, but they will not do their own: one has no management, no frugality, and no industry; another is too fond of pleasure. If he is not scandalously vicious, he loves wine, women, gaming. And to what does all this amount? He might be happy, but sin will not suffer it."16 Wesley contends that men are unhappy because they are unholy, and to him we owe the statement, at least in the English language, though he borrowed it, oddly enough, from Roman paganism, "No vicious man is happy."17 Wesley quotes Saint Paul as saying, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; even so death passed upon all men." And he adds, "And not on man only, but on those creatures also that 'did not sin after the similitude of Adam's

15 Sermon LVI, part 1, ser. 14.
16 Works, IX, p. 236.
17 Nemo malus feliz. Ibid., p. 235.
transgression.' And not death alone came upon them, but all its train of preparatory evils: pain, and ten thousand sufferings. Nor those only, but likewise all those irregular passions, all those unholy tempers, (which in men are sins, and even in brutes are sources of misery) 'passed upon all' the inhabitants of the earth; and remain in all, except the children of God.  

Let us not forget, however, that the incarnation is an historical event, too. God did not just become man but he accepted the "scandal of particularity" by entering history through the womb of the Virgin Mary and becoming a real, definite person by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, a despised Jew who lived and worked in Galilee and Judea during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius Caesar and died under Pontius Pilate. His death on the cross is a fact of history, like the death of any American President or national hero witnessed to and bemoaned by whatever followers decry his passing. Though his death on the cross may defy the limitations of the place and time where and when it occurred through its perennial effects on the lives of people in all subsequent ages, still what it was is altogether historical and indeed what it does takes place also in history and is capable of historical measurement. This led Wesley to say, "We believe Christ to be the eternal, supreme God."  

This redemption is not actually to be had, however, by the people for whom Christ died until they willingly and freely accept it from God by trusting entirely in Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, experiencing his grace by faith in their own hearts, and giving themselves unreservedly to him in loving service. "Wesley is not content to stop with a consideration of what God does for us through the life and death of his Son but moves

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18 Ibid., p. 332.
19 Ibid., VIII, p. 340.
20 Letters, VI, p. 297.
on to a positive statement of what God does in us through his Spirit."22 Charles Wesley's son Samuel became a Roman Catholic. His Uncle John wrote him, "My dear Sammy, your first point is to repent and believe the Gospel. Know yourself a poor, guilty, helpless sinner! Then know Jesus Christ and him crucified! Let the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God, and let the love of God be shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto you; and then, if you have no better work, I will talk with you of transubstantiation or purgatory."23

The salvation of people takes place always within history, for people are the components of history, either those who make it or else have it made for them by others who lead them and cause them to fit into their grandiose schemes. If there is a Hitler or an Ignatius Loyola, then there must be a German people to obey his commands or a company of faithful followers to imitate his example. "The creative personality," writes Arnold Toynbee, "is impelled to transfigure his fellowmen into fellow creators by recreating them in his own image. The creative mutation which has taken place in the micro-cosm of the mystic requires an adaptative modification in the macrocosm before it can become either complete or secure....If the creative genius fails to bring about in his milieu the mutation which he has achieved in himself, his creativeness will be fatal to him. He will put himself out of gear with his field of action;...the creator, when he arises, always finds himself overwhelmingly outnumbered by the inert uncreative mass, even when he has the good fortune to enjoy the companionship of a few kindred spirits."24

Wesley was such a creative genius. He was an historical personage who by the proclamation of the Gospel changed the lives of the people of his own times and had an influence which affected subsequent history. What he propounded as the scheme of salvation and offered as his outline of Christian theology was his anatomy of history as well, since to him the whole course of human events could be seen clearly only in the light of the great Biblical events of the fall of mankind in Adam with an

22 Ibid., p. 213.
23 Letters, VI, 231.
ensuing and almost uninterrupted series of evil deeds and catastrophes brought about by sin, the incarnation and atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ designed by God as the propitiation for the sins of all mankind, and the perennial salvation of people who accept God's grace by faith and seek to serve him daily in the context of their own times in history.

Saint Augustine, whose City of God is the best philosophy of history ever written from the vantage point of the Christian faith, takes as his theme what he calls "The glorious City of God," which he describes in "its temporal stage here below" and sets in contrast with "the earthly city...which lusts to dominate the world and which, though nations bend to its yoke, is itself dominated by its passion for dominion." The constant and unremitting struggle between these two universal principalities provide the contents of history, and Augustine interprets the meaning of history to lie in the final triumph of goodness over wickedness, of the citizens of the City of God over those who pledge allegiance to the earthly city of lust and corruption. "Above all," he writes, "in this war so full of toil and trouble we have to strive to suppress the vain hope that our efforts can bring us victory and also the illusion that, when victory comes, our efforts were the important factor. On the contrary, we owe all victories to God..."

The meaning of history for John Wesley is two-fold. It illustrates through its positive and salutary accomplishments God's providence; while its catastrophes and disasters display God's judgment. He judges and punishes sin in time as well as eternity, and so much pain and sorrow we experience now is due directly to our own misdeeds, and indirectly to the evil conduct of others. David Hume, you recall, could find no evidence, or at least no sufficient evidence, for correspondence between the perpetration of evil and ensuing punishment; and he contended if goodness is not rewarded here and vice punished, what right has anyone to expect that it will be so hereafter. Though Wesley admitted that sometimes the wicked flourish on earth like the palm tree, they will be cut down and burned in the hereafter. Likewise, the

26 Ibid., Book XXII, Ch. 23. Vol. XXIV, p. 480.
durability of a nation or civilization depends upon its moral rectitude. The judgments of God are sure and righteous, and they fall on collections of human beings, the large societies they compose, and the institutions they build as well as on each person individually.

Wesley, like Augustine, traces the ravages of sin throughout history, both sacred and profane. He says if the Hebrews destroyed the children of their enemies, then the Romans destroyed their own children as well. Cato the Elder turned his old and decrepit servants out to starve and his fellow countrymen applauded his frugality. Caesar tortured men to death. The result of all this was punishment and pain, so that it is safe to say that history shows that sin is the "baleful source of all affliction" and the cause of the miseries that overwhelm and destroy cities and kingdoms as well as individuals and that are "the demonstrative proof of ungodliness in every nation under heaven."  

Wesley's interpretation of the judgments of God in history is registered with almost cruel frankness in his short essay entitled "Serious Thought Occasioned by the Late Earthquake at Lisbon." He writes: "Is there indeed a God that judges the world? And is he now making inquisition for blood? If so, it is not surprising, he should begin there where so much blood has been poured on the ground like water! Where so many brave men have been murdered, in the most base and cowardly as well as barbarous manner, almost every day, as well as every night, while none regarded or laid it to heart....How long has their blood been crying from the earth! Yea, how long has that bloody House of Mercy (title for the Inquisition), the scandal not only of all religion, but even of human nature, stood to insult both heaven and earth!"

History, also, demonstrates God's providence. When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, God sent them a deliverer in the person of Moses. When his chosen people disobeyed his law and imitated the peoples of the land about them, he sent Judges to chastize and correct them. When his children fell into sin and depravity and served

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28 Ibid., pp. 206-07.
29 Ibid., p. 208.
30 Ibid., p. 238.
31 Ibid., XI, pp. 1-2.
idols that they had made with their own hands, his spokes­
men appeared, and the prophets proclaimed righteousness
and judgment and promised mercy and loving kindness.
The coming of Jesus was the supreme instance of his pro­
vidence fulfilled in the establishment and continuance
of the church against which hell itself cannot prevail.

Wesley delineates three circles of providence. "The
outmost circle includes the whole race of mankind," all
the human inhabitants of the earth. The middle circle
are those who profess to be Christians and are members
of some church or other; while the inner circle are "the
real Christians; those that worship God, not in form
only, but in spirit and in truth." 32

John Wesley believed that man, created in the image
of God, possessed the power either to accept or to resist
God's grace. The worth of his life depended on whether
or not he gave it to God and allowed God to use it as
he chose. Likewise, periods in history and segments of
time were good or evil, depending on whether good or
evil people were in power, and society and its institu­
tions were molded by a populace devoted to God or to the
devil. As late as 1789, Wesley wrote Freeborn Garrettson
in America: "It signifies but little where we are, so
we are but fully employed by our good Master. Whether
you went, therefore, to the east it is all one, so you
were laboring to promote his work. You are following
the order of his providence wherever it appeared, so an
holy man strangely expressed it in a kind of holy dis­
ordered order." 33

In the last letter he ever penned in the year of
his death, he admonished William Wilberforce: "Unless
God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be
worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if
God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of
these together stronger than God? O be not weary of well
doing! Go on, in the name of God and the power of his
might, til even American slavery (the vilest that ever
saw the sun) shall vanish away before it." 34

The governance of God is not abrogated by man's mis­
use of his freedom and his perpetration of evil. There­
fore it is carried out through judgment and through

32 Sermon LXVII, 16-18.
33 Letters, VIII, pp. 111-12.
34 Ibid., p. 265.
providence, so that judgment itself may be interpreted as within the range of providence although negative and punitive and hopefully corrective in its nature. God makes allowance for the various and sundry expressions of human nature. After all, he created man as a free entity and in Wesley's theology God is loyal to his creation, that is, he will not destroy the nature of the things he has made. God will not save man without man's consent, for freedom is indigenous to human nature as God originally created it. Nonetheless, whether man obeys or disobeys, God is still the Lord of history, capable even of making the wrath of men to praise him.

The reason Wesley can say this is that the final accomplishment of history, according to Wesley's theology, lies beyond history. The last is that for which the first was planned. All history like the span of a single human life, is transitory, temporary, incomplete. Time subserves eternity; the finite, the infinite, earthly history, the everlasting kingdom of God. Therefore what happens here among societies, nations, cultures, and even civilization cannot be evaluated by the internal standards and ideals of their own making but only by the externally revealed standards of heaven. All temporality is assessed by the character of God and demonstrated in the life and work of Jesus Christ. Wesley, commenting on Saint John's vision in Revelation, writes: "The new heaven, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem, are all closely connected. The city is wholly new, belonging not to this world, not to the millennium but to eternity. ...So shall the covenant between God and his people be executed in the most glorious manner."35

Had not Augustine taken the same position many centuries earlier? This is what he wrote in the last chapter of the City of God: "Who can measure the happiness of heaven, where no evil at all can touch us, no good will be out of reach; where life will be one long laud ex-tolling God, who will be all in all; where there will be no weariness to call for rest, no need to call for toil, no place for any energy but praise."36

Wesley's philosophy of history had to be obtained almost by inference. He wrote no tract on the subject as such. Neither does his theology take this issue as one

36 Augustine, op.cit., Book XXII, Ch. 30, Vol. XXIV, p. 505.
of its focal points. When I wrote my *Theology of John Wesley* in 1946, I prepared a careful index of its contents. One can appreciate my consternation when I examined that index and discovered that the word "history" is not there at all. I must confess that I was diabolically relieved to find the same situation in the index to the writings of John Wesley in the Oxford Library of Protestant Thought edited by the world renowned Methodist theologian, Dr. Albert C. Outler. His book was published almost twenty years after mine, and his index goes from Hilary to Hodges to holiness but skips history, too. Therefore, this paper of necessity plows new ground.

But does it really? The new ground is after all a small parcel of the large acreage of spirituality and theological reflection that has been under cultivation since the inception of Methodism. That acreage is mankind, understood, criticized, and appreciated both individually as a single person, unique in his own personhood, and also collectively as the race of humankind, made in God's image and for citizenship in his everlasting kingdom.

Rudolph Bultmann writes: "For meaning in history in this sense could only be recognized if we could stand at the end or goal of history. But man can neither stand at the goal, nor outside of history. He stands within history. The question about meaning in history, however, can be put and must be put in a different sense, namely, as the question about the nature, the essence of history. And this brings us again to the question: What is the core of history? What is its real subject?" "The answer," says Bultmann unequivocally, "is man." He goes on to add, "The historian has to deal with man as he is and was and ever shall be."37

The central concern of Wesley's theology is humanity—people as he saw them in both the past and the present, existing as creatures of a day, spending and being spent on the fulfillment of their own petty desires, always in conflict with the desires of others; and people as he believed they might become, citizens of God's everlasting kingdom, living fully today in anticipation of life eternal. Wesley knew what I am afraid many of us contemporary Methodists have forgot—that we cannot serve people as God would have his people served by trying

merely to improve their living conditions without attempting to change their lives. There can be no kingdom of God apart from citizens who themselves are godly.

We must expect others as well as ourselves to be made perfect in love even in this life.

That expectation and the example of its fulfillment in mission and evangelism is Methodism's contribution both to history and to the interpretation of its meaning.