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Wesley's Methodist Movement: What Might It Have to Offer to Contemporary Roman Catholics?

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Abstract

What might the 18th century English Methodism connected with John Wesley might have to offer contemporary Roman Catholics? What is the relationship between organizations and movements? What are the possibilities for dual identities and membership? Wesley intentionally envisioned and fashioned the Methodist movement as an ecumenical endeavor. His approach anticipated key points made in Vatican II's "Decree on Ecumenism." Although Wesley remained highly critical of Roman Catholicism throughout his life, many of the positions he advocated tended in a "catholic" direction. There are interesting parallels to be drawn between Wesley's Methodism and the contemporary movement of A.A. One can have dual membership in A.A. and in a particular Christian tradition. Is it possible to have dual membership in two Christian traditions? The paper draws upon some traditional sacramental categories to explore the possibility of Roman Catholics living as "methodists" inspired by Wesley in anticipation of the future achievement of full, visible communion.