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Alvin V. Kollmann

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_kollmanna@csl.edu

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PIETISM AND METHODISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

Alvin V. Kollmann

June 1954

Approved by:

Phil J. Schroeder
Adviser

Walter E. Puzgin
Reader

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Eighteenth Century Background

"The greater part of the seventeenth century is known as the Age of Orthodoxy in the Lutheran Church . . . the very legalistic means used to reestablish the Church after the devastations of the Thirty Years' War."¹ Pietistic tendencies appeared both in Lutheran and Reformed circles before the end of the sixteenth century, but they had their largest development in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. At the close of the Thirty Years' War religious life in Protestant Germany was at a low ebb. The control of the Church by the civil government in the various principalities did not make for spirituality. The interpretation of saving faith in terms of intellectual assent, the prevalence of scholasticism, the emphasis upon formal orthodoxy, the absorption of the leading men of the Church in theological controversy, all tended to depress the religious and moral life of the country, and the war itself had demoralizing effects and accentuated conditions already widespread.

This legalistic movement developed into a very one-sided one in which the Bible was regarded, by some, more highly as a compilation of God-given doctrines that must be upheld at all cost than as the power of God to an eternal life of salvation and a temporal life of sanctification. The emphasis was placed on the mind too much to the exclusion of the heart.

¹Henry John Eickhoff, The Decline of Lutheran Church Music During the Period of Rationalism (Unpublished B. D. thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1947), p. 13.

This emphasis, originating with the schoolmen, ultimately came into the preaching of the individual pastor.

As a reaction to this formalistic orthodoxy, the Pietistic movement developed in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. It began only as an effort to improve local religious and moral conditions in Frankfort-on-Main, but it soon spread throughout the country.

Pietism emphasized the duty of striving after personal and individual religious independence and collaboration and declared that religion is something altogether personal, that evangelical Christianity is present only where and in so far as it is manifested in Christian conduct.²

Pietism's great protagonist was Phillip Jacob Spener, who was born in 1653, and held important clerical positions successively in Frankfort, Dresden, and Berlin, until his death in 1705. Many of the proposals for the improvement of the Church and the life of its people made by Spener were the very things needed to wake the Church out of its preoccupation with dogma alone. He proposed and succeeded in shifting

the center of interest from the maintenance of orthodox doctrine to conduct and practical piety, and from the objective validity of the verities of salvation and means of grace to the subjective conditions connected with them, their subjective ethical accountability then following as a necessary corollary.³

Some people do not believe that the Pietistic movement of the eighteenth century in Germany was justified by conditions. They claim that this period of the great dogmaticians was by no means an age of dead orthodoxy. They argue that this period of orthodoxy produced such men as Johann Gerhard, the great dogmatician, who was also a peaceful and a pious man. Then there were John Arndt and Christian Scriver who have written some of the best

²Ibid., p. 14.

³Ibid., p. 14.

devotional books in the Lutheran Church, and Paul Gerhard and others who wrote some of our best hymns. All of these lived during the period of orthodoxy.

The conditions in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century were just as bad as those in Germany at the end of the seventeenth century. It was an age of irreligion and libertinism. Swearing and cursing were quite prevalent. Worse than that was the practically universal passion for gambling which was then at its peak. Drunkenness was very common, not only among the lower classes, but among every class of society. Gin was the common drink and it threatened to change the character of the nation. The English, naturally a kindly race, were rapidly becoming cruel under the influence of gin drinking. Crime continued to increase although there were savage laws. Crimes of violence predominated and human life was cheap so that there were no less than one hundred and sixty offenses punishable by hanging.

Conditions in the church were not much better. The bishops were sadly out of touch with their people. They never mixed with the people, seldom preached before popular assemblies, and associated almost exclusively with the upper classes, with the men of letters and learning. They had no time for the lower classes, never troubled themselves with any plans for improving the condition of the people; nor did they try to get the unchurched hordes to come to church and hear the saving Gospel.

The lesser clergy followed the episcopal lead. Religion was represented as essentially rational. Christianity was justified on prudential grounds. Honesty was the best policy. Christianity paid good dividends in this world and in the next. There was also a universal hatred of

enthusiasm which was partly due to a reaction from Puritanism.

Into this period and these conditions came John Wesley. The year 1739 was the beginning of the great revival. By this time Wesley had found a new religion of love, a religion in sharp contrast to the lifeless, formal religion of the time, and this became the ruling purpose of the great revival, to tell others about this new love of God and of all mankind that he had newly rediscovered.

Early Methodism was an evangelical revival. The sole aim of Methodism, said John Wesley, was "to spread scriptural holiness over the land." To his helpers he said, "You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore, spend and be spent in this work and go always not only to those who want you, but to those that want you most."⁴

⁴John C. Bowmer, The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism (London: Unwin Brothers Ltd., 1951, n.c.), p. 167.

CHAPTER II

PIETISM

Definition

Just what constitutes Pietism is still a matter of dispute and will probably always remain so. The term is used in a narrow and in a broad sense. Sometimes it is applied to specific historical movements, at other times to all those tendencies which exalt feeling in religion and its practical phase to the depreciation of its intellectual content and its expression in ecclesiasticism. But differences of opinion arise when the narrow sense of the term alone is meant. This is due to a three-fold cause: (1) The lack of any official pronouncements upon its doctrine and practice; (2) the differences in Pietism itself at various stages of its development; and (3) the subjectivism which each writer brings to bear upon the subject.¹

Under the general term Pietism, McGiffert treats German Pietism, English Evangelicalism, and the New England Theology. Loofs contends that it is an international phenomenon. Troeltsch applies the common designation "Pietism" to all modern movements and sects which emphasize a personal religious experience and which generally go under the name "evangelical." He even refers to Methodism as a wave of Pietism; although he, with Mirbt, Gruenberg, and others, also limits the term historically to that movement which is essentially German and Protestant. Generalizations can only

¹Arthur Willford Nagler, Pietism and Methodism (Nashville, Tenn.: Publishing House M. E. Church, South, c.1918), p. 11.

roughly approximate the truth; but if a general term is sought to include all the religious revivals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Pietism may serve as well as any. Even the word Hasidism, literally translated, means Pietism; and the Roman Catholic Church had its own form of Pietism in the Jansenist and Quietist propagandas. A reform wave under Ricci and Liguori deeply affected Italy. Even Spain reported ecclesiastical purification.²

An article in the Theological Quarterly defines Pietism as "a sanitary movement, as an effort to cure the Church of certain ailments which not only impaired its well-being, but endangered the very life of the body ecclesiastic." Prout, in his article on Spener and the Theology of Pietism, defines Pietism as "a personal religion of the heart."

In this thesis the term "Pietism" will be used in its narrower sense to preserve its strict historical import and will be confined to that reaction against the orthodoxy of the Lutheran Church which is generally connected with the work of Spener and his coadjutors. The nature of that work has been variously estimated. Some contend that Pietism was nothing more than an attempted "Calvinizing" of the Lutheran Church by the introduction of a spirit of monkish piety.³ Our interest lies with the form which that zeal took in the Lutheran Church in the latter part of the seventeenth and the first part of the eighteenth century, commonly called the Pietism of Spener and of Halle.

²Ibid., p. 12.

³Ibid., p. 12.

Background

In Holland, in the late seventeenth century in the midst of all the disputation over the problem of Church and State in connection with the question, "Should the State enforce religious uniformity?", a reform movement, known as Pietism, arose which influenced subsequent religious history. Pietism thus arose among the disputing Calvinists in Holland where stirring political events and dangers had intensified religious excitement, and was carried to the German states by young ministers who studied in Holland in the then famous Dutch Universities. Gisbert Voet was one of these young ministers who carried Pietism into the German states. He was an influential Pietist who strove for greater religious piety, opposed religious formalism and indifference, and sought a personal religious faith. A pupil of Voet, Jodocus van Lodenstein, has been called the first Pietist, for with him Pietism became a distinct religious movement opposed to formalism and religious indifference.

Lutheranism of this period had a stronger unity than the Calvinists in Holland, and consequently Pietism remained within the Church. Pietists did not argue and thus they stayed within their communion despite the hostility aroused by their procedure. The Pietism which was thus developed was largely contemplative similar to Jacob Boehme's mysticism and St. Bernard's ascetism.

Although it had its precursors in such figures as the mystics, Jacob Boehme and Valentin Weigel, or in moralistic theologians like Johannes Arndt and Balthasar Schuppilus, the Pietist movement as an organized manifestation of German religious life may be said to have begun with the

publication by Philip Jacob Spener of his Pia Desideria oder Wahren evangelischen Kirche in 1675.

Although most people hold that Pietism in general was a good and a necessary movement, there are some who will not admit that it was really a curative process, but hold that it was itself a disease, a most insidious malady. They claim that Pietism was a reaction against orthodoxy itself, its theory and practice, and that its aim was to make doctrine of secondary and life of primary importance in the Church. And this they claim was one feature of this insidious malady, a malady so fearfully destructive that when Pietism had run its course, the days of orthodox Lutheranism were over and past, and rationalism sat enthroned in the high seat of pietistic theology, the university of Halle.

Those who say that Pietism was a good and a necessary movement say that that which brought about the radical change lay in the nature of Pietism itself, which over against the dominant ecclesiastical doctrine exhibited the worth and power of a living, personal, and practical Christianity. The energetic seeking of conversion, as well as a general zeal for fruitfulness in good works, begat an activity which, as soon as it was directed towards the non-Christian world, could not but assume the tendency to seek the conquest of the world for Christ. It is true, indeed, that much narrow-mindedness clung to Pietism, and that this in many ways impaired the freshness and the popularity of its Christianity; but notwithstanding that narrowness, as soon as it allowed itself to be impregnated by missionary ideas, there came to it a width of horizon by which it excelled all its adversaries. While derided as "conventicle Christianity", it embraced the whole world with its loving thoughts, and these loving

thoughts it translated into works of love, which sought to render help alike to the misery of the heathen and to that within Christendom, so that in spite of its "fleeing from the world", it became a world-conquering power.

Spener based the justification of his efforts for reform on the plea that the Reformation had not been completed; that many evils had consequently crept into the Church; that the emphasis had been placed too much upon purity of doctrine and not sufficiently upon purity of life, which had led many people who were living in conscious sin to depend upon the merits of Christ for salvation. His work can thus be understood only upon the background of the Lutheran orthodoxy of the seventeenth century in connection with the social, economic, and political conditions of the times. Pietism thus sprang out of the religious needs of the people, which in turn were intensified by the social, economic, and political conditions of the age.

Leading Exponents in the Rise of Pietism

The most prominent promotor of Pietism in the Lutheran Church was Philip Jacob Spener, whose plastic nature, wide sympathies, and power of assimilation specially fitted him for the task. He was born in Upper Alsace on January 13, 1635. He died February 5, 1705.

Spener became the Lutheran pastor in Frankfort and there he became aroused by the low religious and moral tone of the city. He undertook to raise it by making his preaching more directly practical, by laying emphasis upon life rather than doctrine, by multiplying his pastoral labours, and particularly by holding meetings in his own house for the devotional

study of the Bible, and for prayer and edification. A marked feature of his preaching was his strong eschatological emphasis. He believed that the last times were at hand, and that the return of Christ and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom would take place in the near future.⁴ This gave to much of his work an enthusiastic and somewhat feverish character not unlike that which marked the primitive days of the Christian Church.

Spener felt that the Protestant Reformation had not completed its work, that the purification of doctrine needed to be followed by the sanctification of life. It is clear that the controlling interest throughout was not religious, as with Luther, but moral. Not a man's relation to God was the important thing, but his character and conduct.⁵

Around 1670, Spener instituted religious meetings in his home for instruction and prayer. This conventicle subsequently developed into the movement called Pietism. The immediate cause of these religious meetings in Spener's home, the societies of piety (collegia pietatis), was the religious indifference and dogmatism of the status quo. Real spirituality was absent and Spener undertook the task of restoring spirituality to the life of his congregation. Spener's preaching, as we said above, was practical and stressed life rather than contemporary doctrine. The meetings in his home supported his preaching; for a devotional study of the Bible, prayer, and religious edification were sought after in these

⁴Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Protestant Thought Before Kant (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1922), p. 156.

⁵Ibid., p. 159.

conventicles,

The primary object of the Pietists, therefore, was to infuse a fresh spirit of religious fervour, and to bring into use forms of faith and worship better calculated to satisfy the craving for Innerlichkeit (depth of soul) in devotion and the desire to face the profounder questions which gather round religion.⁶

Pietism is not a complete return to the original Lutheran position, but it is a return to the religion of inner experience which occurs from time to time in the history of the Christian Church.

In 1675 Spener wrote a preface to an edition of Arndt's sermons, which was issued separately a few months later under the title of Pia Desideria, and was read very widely. With its publication Spener sprang at once into prominence, and his influence began to be felt throughout the country. This publication of Spener's Pia Desideria in 1675 with its attack on the contemporary Lutheran Church and a reform platform, was the official launching of a new religious movement. The book is in two parts, and Spener, in true debate style, in the first part portrays the evil conditions of the day—religious indifference, absorption in scholastic theology, and the wide prevalence of immorality—and maintains the possibility of better things. In the second part Spener sets forth the methods to be employed in effecting a reformation. This second part contains what may be called the program of the pietistic movement. This program or platform consists of five recommendations.

Besides sermons, Spener recommends, as his first recommendation, daily Bible reading in the families; public cursory reading of the Bible with brief summaries; religious meetings for mutual edification, where the

⁶William Cardwell Prout, "Spener and the Theology of Pietism," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XV (January, 1947), 48.

laymen of the congregation might give utterance to their thoughts on spiritual matters, propose questions on texts from the Scriptures to be answered by the preachers or more advanced laymen; the whole being under the management and supervision of the called ministers. But these conferences were not in Spener's mind as meetings of the entire congregations. Not the word of God itself and its use, but the modes and methods of its use and application, and chief among them a measure not designed for the entire congregations or for those members who were most in need of spiritual instruction, but for a select, advanced element within the congregation, an ecclesiola in ecclesia, were even in this first recommendation foremost in Spener's mind as he contemplated a reformation of the church. And thus we are here again confronted by that enthusiastic, fanatical trait in Spener's theology, the spirit of those who seek to build and spiritually benefit the church not simply by the word, in whatever manner employed, nor chiefly by its public preaching through the Christian ministry instituted by the Head of the church, but by self-contrived measures and methods like the collegia pietatis introduced by Spener and imitated by the pietists of his following.

The second recommendation is the establishment and diligent exercise of the spiritual priesthood, according to which it is every Christian's duty not only to offer up himself and what is in him, prayer, thanksgiving, good works, alms, etc., but also sedulously to study the word of the Lord; to teach, admonish, convert, and edify others, especially those of his own house, according to the grace given unto him; to observe their life; to pray for all of them and take thought for their salvation according to his ability. Again Spener's tendency toward singling out the select few asserts itself.

The third recommendation is diligently to inculcate the truth that Christianity does not consist in knowing but in doing. Spener might have said that it is not a historical knowledge of credenda, but true and living faith, which makes a Christian. But this is not what he says or means to say. What he would inculcate is not faith, but love. "Especially," he says, "our dear Savior has repeatedly commended love as the true criterion of discipleship."⁷

The fourth recommendation concerns the proper conduct in religious controversies. He contends, first, that not all manner of disputation is beneficial, but that only which is free from carnal affections; and, secondly, that disputation, also if rightly carried on, is not the only way and means of maintaining the truth.

The fifth recommendation concerns the education of preachers in schools and universities. Here Spener says: "We are so constituted that by example as much is effected in us as by doctrine itself, and sometimes even more."⁸ For Spener, our example is to him of equal importance with God's doctrine, or even more efficacious than doctrine itself. Spener closes his recommendations for a better ministry with the insistence that preaching should be simple and practical.

Much of what Spener said in his Pia Desideria was eminently pertinent and timely, evincing a deep concern for the welfare of the church. But in justice to the church of those days two things must not be concealed. The first is that Spener has unduly exaggerated when he made such statements as that the "spiritual estate", the ministry, was "totally depraved" in

⁷"The Malum Pietisticum in Spener's 'Pia Desideria'," Theological Quarterly, I (July, 1897), 297.

⁸Ibid., p. 299.

his day.⁹ This was not true, Spener himself being in evidence to the contrary together with hundreds of worthy ministers among his contemporaries, who with all faithfulness performed their ministerial duties. In the second place we must bear in mind that what Spener laid to the burden of the church was not said or understood as with reference to congregations as we have them in America today, but with reference to the entire populations of cities and country districts, to society at large, every member of which was in those days looked upon as in connection with the parish within the territory in which he or she resided, and under the spiritual care of the pastor or pastors of such territory or parish. What would the record of our city congregations be if the religious life of the entire wards within which their churches are located were to be made the standard whereby to estimate the spiritual state of the congregations worshipping in those churches? That after the ravages of the Thirty Years' War, when millions had been born and had grown into manhood and womanhood without ever having known what peace is, when wide territories had been economically and socially and ecclesiastically devastated—not once, but repeatedly, not for months, but for years and decades of years—there should still be a Lutheran Church ministered to by thousands of orthodox preachers was itself a testimonial of the powerful hold which the Gospel of Christ had obtained upon the masses of the people in earlier days of greater prosperity. And besides, those very years and decades of incessant warfare with its untold miseries had yielded a harvest of theological produce so rich and multiform, that the age of Pietism can in no wise offer an equivalent. Pietistic theology has nothing to boast of which will outweigh such works as those

⁹Ibid., p. 289.

of Leyser, Gerhard, Quenstedt, Balduin, Calow, Huelsemann, Meisner, S. Schmid, Damhauer, and others, some of whom had been Spener's teachers in theology.

But Spener had yielded to other influences. He had been at Basel and Geneva, and that climate had impaired his theological health. In a letter written from Geneva he praises the organization of the Reformed church, and Labadie so impressed him that he translated the manuel de priere of that enthusiast into German. Here his distaste for religious controversies and his inclination toward new measures were engendered. Spener, it must be said, was not thoroughly and consistently loyal to the Lutheran Church. Though he was not conscious of having in any point of doctrine deviated from the Lutheran Symbols, and for himself would continue to receive and maintain them because they are in harmony with the word of God, he would not condemn the practice of permitting a subscription of the Confessions as far as they agreed with the divine word. He could never be prevailed upon to repudiate such writings as those of the wayward shoemaker, Jacob Boehme, the ranting chiliast Petersen, and other fanatics of like or similar stripe; and the bitter enemy of all orthodoxy and panegyrist of the heretics of all ages, Gottfried Arnold, was his "dear brother."¹⁰ While he has not a word of complaint for the fanatical, rationalistic, and syncretistic leaven which had been or was being smuggled into the Lutheran Church, he speaks of the needfulness of a reformation in the Lutheran ministry and complains loudly of the undue weight laid upon religious controversies and of the theological subtleties which

¹⁰Ibid., p. 291.

he sets down as "wood, hay, and stubble" built upon the fundament of faith.¹¹

But it is not by chance that the father of Pietism should laud and recommend another perversion of Christianity. Pietism is also a species of selfishness, though not in the manner and degree of that isolated piety of the recluse shaped after the model of Thomas a Kempis. The pietist looked about for those who, like himself, aspired to a more exquisite form of godliness than that attained by the crowd, the common Christian living on the common fare of the congregation as offered forth in the sermons of public worship by the common preachers; he craved for edification of a more congenial stamp, bearing the imprint of an ecclesiola, the enjoyment of which was an advantage and prerogative of a spiritual nobility of which we have found various indications in the Fia Desideria. The animus of the Pietist was not so much to draw and elevate the masses of Christians to his own superior level or what he considered such, but rather to come out of the throng and withdraw with the preferred few to the privacy and seclusion of the collegium pietatis with its peculiar methods and means of spiritual advancement and enjoyment. Pietism is here again what it is above, enthusiasm, substituting piety, and not a sound, wholesome, God-given, but an unsound, self-made piety, for the word and sacraments, the means of grace entrusted to the church at large and to every local congregation for the conversion of sinners, the upbuilding of the church, and the edification of all its members. And thus the progress from Pietism to Rationalism was but a shifting from one form of enthusiasm to another, from emotional to intellectual enthusiasm. It was not at all by chance

¹¹Ibid., p. 291.

that the same orthodox Loescher who had written the *Timotheus Verimus* against Pietism should have to raise his warning voice against the theologizing philosophy of Leibnitz and Wolff in his papers entitled, Quo ruitis?, "Whither are ye rushing," and that, what had been the chief stronghold of Pietism, Halle, should be turned into the first stronghold of rationalistic theology in Germany.

Spener was the prophet, the father-confessor, of the Pietistic movement, but he lacked those qualities which Wesley possessed in a pre-eminent degree--energy, aggressiveness, and administrative talent. These deficiencies in Spener's character found extraordinary expression in the personality of Francke. Spener and Francke together were to Pietism what Wesley was to Methodism.

Next to Spener, Francke was the chief representative of the Pietist movement, which, notwithstanding all its one-sidednesses first awakened within and beyond the Lutheran Church the fresh spiritual life, which became the mother-womb of a true missionary vitality. As the founder of the orphanage at Halle, Francke enjoyed a reputation far beyond Germany, and exercised a vast influence upon the living Christians of his time. Francke was also a most gifted teacher. In those who came in near contact with him he stirred a spirit of absolute devotion to divine service, such as he himself possessed in highest measure and which made them ready to go anywhere where there was need of them.

Reacting to the standardized, scholastic theology developed by the Lutheran orthodoxy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Pietism developed a religion which stressed the need of enthusiasm, which aroused the emotions rather than the intellect, and which depended more on intuition

than on the rational sense. "Our aim," said Francke, "must be not to build up scientia but rather to arouse the conscientia."¹² Pietists emphasized enthusiasm in prayer, enthusiasm in service, enthusiasm in all the relations both of God and man and of man and man. The language of their sermons and homilies was full of words and expressions which aimed to arouse the imagination and feelings of their hearers or readers. "Just as a drunkard becomes full of wine, so must the congregation become filled with spirit," declared Theophilus Grossgebauer. "The sermons must be delivered with the most ardent zeal. The words must be fire and flames." This zeal, this inflamed enthusiasm, moreover, must be kept constantly at a high pitch of excitement.

Just as a fire goes out when it is not continually fed, just as hot water cools if it is not standing on fire, just as the clock remains still if it is not wound, so our spirits too, even though once made warm by God, inflamed and set going, yet must always and daily be inflamed anew.¹³

Stress on feeling and on a more inward experience of religious sentiment went hand in hand with a strong doubt, and even disparagement, of the powers of human reason. Feeling, intuition, and revelation, all were necessary because human reason in itself is insufficient and impotent to fathom the deeper underlying problems of human destiny. "With mere instruments of reason," declared Bogatzky, "we cannot meet the powers of darkness and unbelief. They are mere straw tools."¹⁴ This supreme irrationalism is fully developed in the Herzensreligion of Zinzendorf. "He who wishes to comprehend God with his mind," wrote Zinzendorf, "becomes an

¹²Koppel S. Finson, "Pietism--A Source of German Nationalism," Christendom A Quarterly Review, I (Winter, 1936), 271.

¹³Ibid., p. 272.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 272.

atheist."¹⁵ These tendencies--the exaltation of enthusiasm, feeling, and intensity of emotional response, and the growing tendency to turn away from reason as the guiding principle of existence--permeate German life and thought during the eighteenth century. The irrationalism and anti-intellectualism spread by Pietism and the other tendency of Pietism, the stressing of enthusiasm, once poured forth in their prayers and sermons.

Results

Pietism first gave expression to the novel idea of individualism. Lutheran orthodoxy of the post-Reformation period crushed in the well of individualism which had been opened up by Luther. It came to be most hostile to all expressions of individuality and freedom. The Symbolical Books were set up as the final and indubitable authorities. Education and society became rigidly mechanized. Against this mechanization the Pietist movement reacted, attempting to free man from the dogmatic burden and turn him toward his inner self. Pietism reaffirmed emphatically the Protestant tendency that the individual, released from all external means of salvation and from being bound by a firm church organization, should find his personal relationship to God in his own self. Pietism broke down the rigid distinctions between the priestly and lay classes. Each individual, even a layman, could come into direct and immediate relationship with God. Not only the clergy, but all Christians without distinction of old or young, man or woman, slave or freeman, were spiritual priests.

Because of the enthusiastic trait of Pietism, it looked about for

¹⁵Ibid., p. 272.

substitutes for that by which alone God has promised to work whatever His power and grace would bring about in the hearts of men toward their salvation, the word of God. And thus it was not by accident that the Pietistic movement has led to a multitude of fanatical excesses, not intended, of course, by Spener and other leaders, but naturally growing as fanatical fruits from an enthusiastic tree.

From Francke's time onward, missions were no longer regarded merely as a duty of colonial governments, but as a concern of believing Christendom, that individual voluntaryism (freewillighood) was involved in them, and that this voluntaryism was made active in furnishing means for their support.

The narrowness of Pietism was a safeguard against the mediaeval error of external conversions in masses; it led evangelical missions back to apostolic lines, and bred them to a healthy Christian development out of narrowness into breadth.

CHAPTER III

METHODISM

Definition

The name of "Methodists" was given to a little group of friends at Oxford before John Wesley came there. A young gentleman of Christ Church, struck with the exact regularity of their lives and studies, said, "Here is a new sect of Methodists sprung up." The name "Methodist" was quaint, and not inappropriate. The members of the little Society were soon known by it throughout the University. The title was not new. It was used to describe an ancient school of physicians who thought that all diseases might be cured by a specific method of diet and exercise. In 1639, there is a reference in a sermon preached at Lambeth to "plain packstaff Methodists," who despised all rhetoric. About forty years before it found its most famous application when it was given to Dr. Williams and other Non-conformist divines to describe their views on the method of man's justification before God. "Methodist" was not the only name given to this Society at Oxford. The Reforming Club, the Godly Club, the Holy Club, Sacramentarians, Bible Moths, Supererogation Men, and Enthusiasts were all in use. John Wesley was called the Curator, or Father of the Holy Club.¹

In this thesis the term "Methodism" will serve as the designation of that religious revival in England which justly claims John Wesley as its founder and which eventually developed into a separate Church.

¹John Telford, The Life of John Wesley (New York: Eaton & Mains, n.c.), pp. 58 f.

Background

The ruling purpose of the great revival was that the lifeless formal religion of the time was a sad contrast to that religion of love, the love of God and all mankind, which John and Charles Wesley had found.

The year that saw the dawn of the Revival was 1739. Oxford Methodism gave its name to the new movement, but it knew little about the righteousness of faith which the friends of the Society had at last attained. For Oxford Methodism had no such message to deliver, and without such a message there could have been no revival.

England was in a terrible condition when Methodism appeared. It was an unhappy age of irreligion and libertinism. There was a coarseness of tongue. But more serious than the prevailing coarseness of tone was the well-nigh universal passion for gambling which had reached its height during this epoch. Again, there has perhaps been no period in English history when drunkenness was so common in every class of society. The rapid increase in gin drinking was a fact of the greatest importance in the history of the century. Gin drinking threatened to change the character of the nation. The English are naturally a kindly race, but under the influence of gin drinking they were rapidly becoming cruel.

Through this period crime continued to increase in spite of savage laws. Crimes of violence predominated. Neither the criminal nor the criminal code had any respect for the sanctity of human life. In those days, there were no less than one hundred and sixty offenses which were expiated on the gallows.

The bishops as a whole were sadly out of touch with the problems of

their age. They never mixed with the people, seldom preached before popular assemblies, and associated almost exclusively with the upper classes, with the men of letters and learning. From time to time they emerged from their palaces to conduct a ceremonial confirmation tour. But they never troubled themselves with any plans for improving the condition of the people, or tried to establish contact with the neglected hordes who never came inside a church.

The lesser clergy followed the episcopal lead. Religion was represented as essentially rational. Christianity was justified on prudential grounds. Honesty was the best policy. Christianity paid good dividends both in this world and in the next. There was a universal hatred of "enthusiasm" which was partly due to a reaction from Puritanism. In Wesley's time it was always used in a hostile sense as a misconceit of inspiration, that is, as a false claim to be inspired. The enthusiast was a man who rejected tradition and the authority of the Church, and who claimed to be the channel for divinely-inspired messages. Enthusiasm was often associated with loose morals and indifference to the conventional standards of society. It is therefore easy to understand Wesley's indignation on being accused of enthusiasm.

R. Knox in his book "Enthusiasm" says that at this time the stage was badly set for enthusiasm, implying, of course, that Wesley was an enthusiast. The French preachers had made no good name for themselves, and they were still active when Methodism began. The Moravians, quite reasonably connected with Wesley in the public mind, were soon to be the talk of the town through Zinzendorf's eccentricities. Then Wesley's preaching begins, and what the world hears (for the world only hears what

is of news-value) is that the audience on such occasions is apt to fall down in a fit and lie screaming on the ground; it hears of George Bell, with a positiveness exceeding that of the Camisards themselves, announcing the exact day of the ensuing month on which the world will come to an end, and being treated by many of his fellow Methodists as an oracle.

It may be the fate of any enthusiastic movement to produce a disconcerting backwash. Those religious people who react against it find themselves in alliance with the world, and from rubbing shoulders with the world often acquire a character of worldliness.

Methodism had, in reality, two distinct enemies. On one side was the world. On the other side you have the clergy of Wesley's day, many of them, refusing him the use of their pulpits; sometimes, with much less excuse, denying communion to his adherents. Frequently, the mobs which attacked Wesley or his lieutenants had been given a plain hint from the pulpit that their cat-calls would be doing God service.

Those persecutions demanded of the early Methodists all the firmness of confessors. The ill-wishers who set on the press-gangs, not once but often, to round up the lay preachers as having no visible means of subsistence; the busybodies who put it about everywhere that Wesley was in league with the Pretender, can expect no gentle verdict from posterity. Throughout this period there was a great deal of mob violence and bearing of false witness.

Many years before Wesley opened his campaign, new life had been brought into the Church of England by the "Religious Societies." Wesley no doubt hoped that the Methodist Societies would be equally successful in reviving the spirit of religion within the Church of England.

Wesley dearly loved the Church of England, and when he varied from her at all in practice—in doctrine, he never knowingly varied from her—it was because he thought he was justified in so doing by the customs of primitive times.²

Leading Exponents in the Rise of Methodism

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was born at Epworth Parsonage on June 17, 1703. He was the fifteenth of nineteen children. His parents were Samuel and Susanna Wesley. He was descended from a long line of English gentry and clergymen. The highest education and the best breeding had been enjoyed by both sides of the house for many generations.

The Wesleys were familiar with poverty. Mrs. Wesley's first care was to teach her children obedience. Religious training began as early as possible, Mrs. Wesley herself teaching the children as soon as they were five years old. Such was the effect of the religious training on John that his father admitted him to the Communion when he was only eight years old.³ On February 9, 1709, when John was only five and a half years old, he was miraculously saved when fire burned the Rectory.

On January 28, 1714, Wesley was nominated on the foundation of Charterhouse and that was the school he attended. After that he was elected to Christ Church, which he entered on June 24, 1720. Thus Wesley entered Oxford University in June, 1720, a week after his seventeenth birthday, and spent his undergraduate days at Christ Church. Wesley's health during his first years at college was far from vigorous. He was also apparently

²Arnold Lunn, John Wesley (Binghamton, N. Y.: Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., c.1929), p. 171.

³Telford, op. cit., p. 20.

in a chronic state of financial embarrassment.

Wesley was ordained deacon in Christ Church Cathedral on Sunday, September 19, 1725, by Dr. Potter, then Bishop of Oxford, who also admitted him to priest's orders in the same place on September 22, 1728. On March 17, 1726, Wesley was unanimously elected Fellow of Lincoln College and was admitted March 28. He took his Master of Arts degree on February 14, 1727. From August 4, 1727, till November 1729 he acted as his father's curate, helping mainly at Wroote. Wesley's work at Wroote had not much immediate fruit. (It is included in his description,

From the year 1725 to 1729 I preached much, but saw no fruit of my labor. Indeed, it could not be that I should; for I neither laid the foundation of repentance, nor of believing the Gospel; taking it for granted that all to whom I preached were believers, and that many of them needed no repentance.

John Wesley's life at Wroote was the only experience he had as an English parish clergyman.

Wesley returned to Oxford on November 22, 1729, to become the head of the Methodist movement in the University. This little Society was made up of four members, two of whom of course were John and Charles Wesley. The other two members were William Morgan and Robert Kirkham. The Oxford Methodists carefully sought to order their lives. They studied to do the will of God in all things, to pray with fervour, to use ejaculations or hourly prayers for humility, faith, hope, love, and the particular virtue they set themselves to seek each day. Up to the 24th of August, 1730, they had quietly pursued their studies and their devotional exercises, doing all the good that lay in their power. After that day they entered upon that

⁴Ibid., p. 53.

work of charity which was to bear such blessed fruit. Mr. Morgan led the way. They visited and taught the prisoners in the Castle. Then they started visiting the sick. They resolved to spend an hour or two a week in looking after the sick, provided that the minister of the parish in which any of these lived should not be opposed to it.

On October 21, 1735, John and Charles Wesley sailed for Georgia. John Wesley's motives in accepting this mission were a sincere desire to work out his own salvation and a longing to preach Christ to the Indians. After a brief time of preaching at Frederica with no success, Wesley's labors were confined to Savannah. He had less prospect than ever of preaching to the Indians, for which purpose alone he had gone to America. Up to the time when Wesley repelled Mrs. Williamson from the Communion he had worked in Savannah with great success. But all was changed by this faithful exercise of discipline. He was brought before a grand jury and when it became clear that he would not be allowed to justify himself, Wesley left for England. That was on December 2, 1737.

After arriving in England, he caught his first glimpse of English life after his absence in America, and of the need for a great revival of true religion in his native land. He now met and became acquainted with Peter Böhler and other Moravians from Herrnhuth and learned what they believed. On May 1, 1738, the Wesleys and their friends in London, acting on the advice of Peter Böhler, had formed a little religious Society. They were to meet together every week to confess their faults and pray for one another. The Wesley's were no strangers to the blessing of religious fellowship. The Oxford Methodists had found that the only way in which they could keep alive their zeal and spirituality was to meet frequently

together. Wesley says the first rise of Methodism was at Oxford in November, 1729, when four friends met together, as we said above; the second at Savannah in April, 1736, when twenty or thirty met at his house; the third when this Society in London was formed with ten members.⁵ Anyway, the determining influence on John Wesley came from German Pietism through his association with these Moravians in London.⁶ Under their influence he passed through a religious experience at 8:45 P. M. on Wednesday, May 24, 1738, which he always referred to afterwards as his conversion, although he had already been for some years an ordained clergyman of uncommon piety and devoutness. For Wesley, this event meant a transfer of emphasis from baptism to conversion, from the Church as an institution to the personal religious experience of the individual Christian. It meant also a return to the genuine but practically forgotten Reformation platform of a present salvation by faith alone, through grace, and not through works. This was the birth of English evangelicalism, and the beginning of the great evangelical revival, for the preaching of Wesley's new-found gospel followed as a matter of course. After his religious experience, Wesley began to believe in instantaneous conversions. His visit to the Moravian settlement of Herrnhuth, on the borders of Bohemia, in 1738, gave him confidence in the teaching by which he had gained peace of mind and heart, for there he found many living witnesses to the reality of saving faith.)

This is clearly brought out by Wesley's statement, "No Scripture can

⁵Ibid., p. 147.

⁶Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Protestant Thought Before Kant (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), p. 182.

mean that God is not love."⁷ In other words, Scripture must be interpreted by personal experience. The final touchstone of truth is the inner witness. The keynote to Wesley's religious experience was the discovery that God is love, and anything which contradicted that discovery must be false. (To make personal experience the touchstone of dogma comes perilously near that enthusiasm which Wesley condemned. But in one sense, at least, most religious people are enthusiasts. They may take their official belief from the Church, but the beliefs which give reality to their inner life are based on personal experience.)

(After his return to England Wesley's views were changed when the ministers refused to let him preach in their churches. At first Wesley did not care much for the idea of field preaching, but since he was shut out of the churches he didn't have much choice. To a friend who charged him with invading other men's parishes and meddling with souls that did not belong to him, Wesley replied in a letter which contained the famous phrase,

I look upon the world as my parish; God in Scripture commands me according to my power to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another's parish; that is, in effect to do it at all; seeing that I have now no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall. Whom then shall I hear: God or Man. . . ? I look upon the world as my parish; thus far, I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings of salvation.⁸

On April 17, 1739, John Wesley was in Bristol, not preaching but conducting a sort of Bible class. He expounded the fourth chapter of Acts, and then;

⁷Lunn, op. cit., p. 157.

⁸Ibid., p. 134.

We called upon God to confirm his word. Immediately one that stood by (to our no small surprise) cried out aloud, with the utmost vehemence, even as in the agonies of death. But we continued in prayer, till a new song was put in her mouth. . . . Soon after two other persons . . . were seized with strong pain, and constrained to roar for the disquietness of their heart. But it was not long before they likewise burst forth into praise to God their Savior. The last who called upon God as out of the belly of hell was I. E., a stranger in Bristol. And in a short space he also was overwhelmed with joy and love."⁹

The Methodist paroxysms, although they are usually referred to as if they started on the occasion named, began in fact not at Bristol, but in London. Three months before when Wesley was expounding in the Minories, a well-dressed woman suddenly cried out as in the agonies of death. Little more than a week after Bristol, during a sermon at Newgate (Bristol),

one, and another, and another sunk to the earth; they dropped on every side as thunderstruck. The same thing happened in the evening; almost before we called upon him (Christ) to set his seal, he answered;

it will be noticed that by now a deliberate prayer-technique is used for the evocation of the symptoms.¹⁰

There is a cry, or a roar; usually (not always) the afflicted person drops to the ground; you can see that he or she is something in the position of the demoniac healed after the Transfiguration; Satan is letting his prey go, with the utmost reluctance. The bystanders fall to prayer. . . .¹¹

More commonly, the Wesleyan manifestations were dismissed as coming under one or another of two heads--lunacy or hysteria. There is no doubt that some of these cases of convulsions of body and mind were impostures. But when all deductions have been made, many of the earlier cases are still unaccounted for. No explanation meets these cases save that which ascribes

⁹R. A. Knox, Enthusiasm (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), pp. 520 f.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 521.

¹¹Ibid., p. 524.

them to intense conviction of sin. This has often been known to throw body and mind into an agony of distress.

Anyone who studied Wesley's relation to his Societies will soon see how resolutely he set himself to grapple with the vices of his day. Wherever Methodism was planted it contributed in no small degree to a general reformation of manners. It made its members better citizens, and raised the whole standard of morality. No truce was ever made with sin. It is easy to quote primitive precedent for the distinctive features of the Quarterly Meetings of these Societies. At these Meetings, Wesley distributed tickets, which he compares to the commendatory letters mentioned by the apostles, to members whom he wished to retain in the Societies. (Wesley says of these tickets:

These supplied us with a quiet and inoffensive method of removing any disorderly member. He has no new ticket at the quarterly visitation (for so often the tickets are changed), and thereby it is immediately known that he is no longer of the community.¹²

These tickets were much prized. Methodists often left instructions that their tickets should be buried with them, but more often they were handed down from father to son, and a series of tickets proving a long connection with the Methodist Societies was treasured.

A brief sketch of the Methodist Constitution is necessary in order to appreciate Wesley's administrative genius. The original Fetter Lane Society was divided into bands. Each band consisted of not fewer than five, nor more than ten persons, who met weekly to confess their faults one to another and to pray for one another that they may be healed. It is important to distinguish between the bands and the classes, a distinction which is not always made very clear in Methodist writings. Long after the

¹²I²urn, op. cit., p. 172.

class meetings had become an integral part of Methodism, the bands remained a distinct institution. They constituted an inner ring, an exclusive order of very devout Methodists. They were the Ironsides on whom Wesley relied in a crisis. He made the members of the bands his counsellors, and he was accustomed to bring difficult cases before them for consideration. In 1744, The Methodists were arranged in the following groups; United Societies, Bands, Select Societies, and Penitents. The United Societies was the largest and least select group, for it merely consisted of "awakened persons." The Bands were more select, and the Select Societies, as its name implies, were really extremely exclusive. Finally, there were the Penitents, who had made shipwreck of their faith. But whereas the bands were composed of the elect, every member of a Methodist Society normally belonged to a class, and the Class Meeting is an instance of Wesley's quickness to recognize the latent tactical possibilities of every suggestion which was brought before him.)

February 15, 1742, is an important date in the history of Methodism. On that day, a Meeting was held in Bristol to discuss the best method of liquidating the debt on the Meeting House. A certain Captain Foy, one of the many sea-going captains in the Society of Bristol, suggested that every member of the Society should contribute a penny a week. It was objected that many of the members were too poor to afford a weekly contribution. "True," replied Captain Foy, "then put ten or twelve of them to me. Let each of these give what they can weekly and I will supply what is wanting."¹⁵ The Captain's proposal was accepted. It was agreed to divide the Bristol Society into classes and to appoint in each class a

¹⁵Ibid., p. 173.

leader to collect the weekly contributions and to hand them over to the stewards. Wesley appointed the leaders, and assigned to each of them a class of about twelve members. (The penny collection for the relief of the poor was already in existence, and as Mr. Simon points out,

The novel feature of the captain's suggestion is its recognition of the principle that, in the Methodist Society, the richer members should make up the deficiency in a common fund which arises from the inability of the poorer members to contribute to it. That principle still governs the whole system of Methodist finance.¹⁴)

Wesley was quick to discover that Captain Foy's plan had other virtues besides solving the financial problem at Bristol. Shortly after the captain's scheme had been adopted, one of the class leaders reported to Wesley that he had discovered a member of his class, on whom he had called for a contribution, "in drink." It flashed across Wesley's mind that there was yet another role for the class leader. He could watch over the souls of his brethren, while extracting pennies from their pockets. He could encourage the faint-hearted, admonish the backsliders, and report the impenitents to Wesley. Wesley, himself was no longer able to support the entire pastoral care of the Societies. It was a stroke of genius to transform the class leaders into a lay pastorate. The experiment proved successful and thenceforward the class leaders became an integral part of the Methodist constitution. Before long, the class leaders discovered that it was well-nigh impossible to pay twelve weekly visits to the twelve members of their class. Difficulties often arose because masters or mistresses, relatives or parents hostile to the Methodists prevented the invasion of their households by the class leaders. It was therefore decided

¹⁴Ibid., p. 174.

that class members should meet together for an hour twice a week. The class leaders were expected to present a report every three months to Wesley on the spiritual condition of the class members appointed to their care. It is not difficult to understand the success of the class meetings. Man is a social animal. Those who have never lacked friends will not find it easy to realize the loneliness of our great cities, and the Methodists deserved to succeed because they put into practice the Christian ideal of brotherliness. They sought out the friendless and befriended them. The class meeting was, in effect, a club, a Travellers' Club whose members met twice a week to compare notes, and to exchange experiences in their spiritual progress towards the New Jerusalem. Lonely folk for whom nobody cared, were invited, nay urged, to talk about their souls. Can one wonder that the class meeting succeeded, for it exploited the most universal, and the most human of failings--vanity.

If Methodism owes much of its success to the class meetings, it owes its very existence to the institution of the lay preacher. The three names that head the list of Wesley's lay preachers are John Cennick, Joseph Humphreys, and Thomas Maxfield. Wesley says, "Joseph Humphreys was the first lay-preacher that assisted me in England, in the year 1738."¹⁵ The growth of Methodism rendered it necessary to provide a systematic arrangement of circuits and to appoint a preacher for each. Every lay preacher had to begin as a "local" before he was permitted to be an "itinerant." The preacher who superintended the whol of a circuit was called the Superintendent. The temporal affairs of these Societies were managed by Stewards. The officers of the Societies were the Ministers, Assistants, Stewards,

¹⁵Telford, op. cit., p. 214.

Leaders of the Bands, Leaders of the Classes, Visitors of the Sick, Schoolmasters, and Housekeepers. Wesley soon realized that it was necessary to provide a governing body for the scattered Societies. He intended, during his lifetime, to control any governing body he might find it necessary to create, and unless some such organization was called into existence, the Societies, as Wesley foresaw, could hardly survive his death. The Annual Conference, which is still the supreme governing body of Methodism, first met on June 25, 1744.

Wesley believed in unity of command, the unity, of course, being John Wesley. It would be idle to deny that he was an autocrat. Wesley did not disdain advice, but he was too clear-headed to pretend that he believed in democratic control. He did not make the mistake of putting Methodism on a democratic basis, which is one of the many reasons why Methodism has succeeded. Wesley's politics might fairly be described as ultraconservative. He did not understand the meaning of democracy. It is true that he urged the rich to give all they could, but he did not incite the poor to take all they could. He was never tired of extolling the importance of good citizenship, the virtues of which are definitely fostered by the kind of religion in which Wesley believed. Wesley distrusted mysticism, chiefly because the mystic was an unsociable person only concerned to save his own soul. He never forgot a remark made to him in his Oxford days: "You cannot serve God alone. You must, therefore, find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion."¹⁶

To join the Societies all that was necessary was a desire for salvation. To remain a member of the Societies, all that was necessary was a high

¹⁶Lynn, op. cit., p. 285.

standard of personal conduct. Wesley imposed an ethical, but not a doctrinal test. Methodism was a personal and experimental religion. Life and experiment must come first. The philosophy of a religion must be deduced from experience. Wesley was always testing and reshaping his creed in congruity with the practical requirements of the evangelical mission field.

No man was so familiar with the English mobs of his day as John Wesley. In almost every place he visited opposition was sooner or later stirred up against the despised Methodists. In these encounters with the mobs and others who tried to interrupt his preaching, Wesley was usually victorious. Gradually the mobs began to leave him alone. He had God and the law on his side.

Wesley did a great deal of traveling and was very concerned about being prompt at all times. Wherever he went, on foot or on horseback, in coach or in sailing vessel, he was a pleasant companion, who generally won all hearts, and never lost an opportunity of doing good.

On February 28, 1784, Wesley executed his Deed of Declaration, which has been called the Magna Charta of Methodism. The act of the majority was to bind all. A legal constitution was now given to the Conference.

The destitute condition of his American Societies at length drove Wesley to make provision for the administration of the Sacraments by ordaining ministers. Soon after his return to England from America, Wesley had a new idea on apostolic succession—"bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order, and originally every Christian congregation was a Church independent of all others."¹⁷ From this position Wesley never withdrew.

¹⁷Telford, op. cit., p. 305.

John Wesley replied to his brother's fears about the ordinations for America in 1784: "I firmly believe I am a Scriptural episkopos, as much as any man in England or in Europe; for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove."¹⁸ Four years before he had expressed his conviction that he had as much right to ordain as to administer the Sacrament. Other ordinations to the ordinary work of the ministry in America, Scotland, and even in England followed.)

The Wesleys had done all they could to bind their Societies to the Church urging them to take communion there. At an early date, however, Wesley was compelled to administer the Lord's Supper to his own people in London and Bristol. Charles was the first to do this on April 12, 1741, in Kingswood Schoolroom. Although Wesley never wanted to separate from the Church of England, his Deed of Declaration, his ordinations, and the licensing of his chapels and preachers under the provisions of the Toleration Act show that he was more careful for the continuance of the work than for any formal connection with the Church of England. Wesley took all possible care that Methodism should not perish with his death. However, Wesley's death removed the last barrier to complete independence, and it wasn't long after his death that the Methodists separated from the Church of England. Wesley died on Wednesday, March 2, 1791, at the age of 88.

From the first Wesley strikes one as a man determined to forge a weapon. It was not enough to be an evangelist, he must create and organize a movement. Wesley was a man with strength of will, the power of resignation, tireless energy, generosity of nature, stern principles, and a conviction of the one thing needful. He always read while he rode horseback to preach

¹⁸Ibid., p. 307.

some place.

When Wesley died he left behind him a powerful religious body, Anglican in its inspiration, and for the most part in its membership, but ripe for schism. Wesley in fact was the parent and the head of a great religious organization. He was not a great organizer. To the end of his life he remained the sole source of authority in a movement that was continually in need of wet-nursing; he must be here, there, and everywhere, or things began to go wrong.

Wesley's tours were indeed missionary journeys, and he was always breaking fresh ground. But as the years go on Wesley's incessant round, without ever ceasing to be a missionary journey, takes on more and more the character of a pastoral visitation. And it was a visitation, not merely of the local officials, but of the members individually. The house-to-house visiting, upon which he always laid emphasis, was a burden he himself would share, however grievous it might be to flesh and blood.

Wesley's self-chosen parish covered England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland; but he found, evidently, a great variety of spiritual soil, whether among these or in England itself. Wales, which at first seemed promising, went Calvinist under the influence of Howell Harris. Over Scotland Wesley continued to spend much effort, but with little result. His appeal was emotional rather than intellectual, and these northerners, glutted with pulpit theology, found little to admire in it. If Scotland was the wayside, Ireland was the stony ground, in which congregations grew up all too fast, to wither away no less unaccountably. In England the countries of Yorkshire, Cornwall, Durham, Lancashire, and Lincolnshire were strong in Societies. There was a constant and violent leakage in the movement, with great variations in

membership. The movement did not grow steadily like a snowball, it advanced and recoiled. Always Wesley had the task of filling a leaky vessel. Meanwhile, he was constantly active in pruning the local Societies of those unworthy members who were reported to him as walking disorderly.

It has been said that there is scarcely a detail of Wesley's wonderfully complete system of which he can properly be called the originator, and Southey is probably right in holding that he was considerably indebted to the Moravians. He did not, indeed, reproduce that rather questionable expedient of Moravian discipline which encouraged secret monitors to spy on their brethren. However, the classes, originally designed to ease the payment of subscriptions, developed into a system of close supervision. Such an unscrupulous borrower as Wesley was would find no difficulty in first adopting and then adapting the Moravian technique; he would go about the world preaching the New Birth after their fashion, but not insisting on the instantaneousness of its effects, with his own experience to guide him. It does not follow that because his own conversion puzzled him at the time, Wesley would look back on it afterwards as a thing of no importance.

When you were converted, when you experienced the New Birth, what did it mean? According to Wesley, that you were then and there conscious of Christ having died for your sins, and of yourself as then and there accepted in Him; but nothing proved you would not have fallen away from that faith in six months' time. According to Whitefield, it gave you the conviction that you were irrevocably sealed for heaven. How could it be supposed that such a major misunderstanding could be hushed up, among the rank and file of a movement which was pledged to the doctrine of conversion, which regarded the very circumstance of conversion as an infallible guarantee of the convictions that came with it? During the whole period between 1740 and 1770, Methodism

had two nations in its womb. The inevitable separation was only staved off by the immense respect which the rival controversialists, Wesley and Whitefield, had for one another; against their own better judgment they persisted in trying to convince themselves that their differences were of minor importance. Never were theologians so resolved to make a molehill out of a mountain. For George Whitefield was the co-founder of Methodism, and it was not Wesley, but Whitefield, who started field preaching; who first sought the aid of lay-preachers, who held the first Methodist Conference. It was Whitefield who really set the movement going in the American colonies. Dr. Piette calls Whitefield the greatest orator of the Revival. But Whitefield, though an inspired orator, had something of the orator's unreliability. At one moment he will be sobbing his heart out over a reconciliation with dear honoured Mr. Wesley; the next, he will be producing a pamphlet against him. In 1770, as in 1740, it was Wesley who broke the peace. He was no doubt genuinely disturbed by the scandal of antinomianism, no doubt genuinely convinced that the Calvinist preaching gave it a handle. The Wesleyan Conference of 1771 did in fact repudiate the doctrine of salvation by works, but in self-defense rather than in recantation.

It would be impossible to claim that the Church of England, by a process of gradual ostracism, drove Wesley away from its communion. The cleavage came, not from its side, but from Wesley and still more from his followers. "I live and die a member of the Church of England," John Wesley wrote in 1790, and it was not until five years later that his followers decided by a majority to separate from the establishment.¹⁹ Wesley was not, perhaps,

¹⁹ Knox, op. cit., p. 506.

rigidly logical in his notions of church membership; you find him receiving communion at a Presbyterian service in Edinburgh and baptizing according to the Presbyterian rite at Glasgow, yet preaching from an Episcopalian pulpit at Banff. He had made up his mind he would not separate from the church, only vary from it. But unquestionably he had, all his life, a deep and growing conviction that his societies would revolt from the Anglican allegiance, and in doing so become a dry and formal sect; the shadow of that conviction darkened his declining years. The question for secession was up before the Conference in 1755, 1756, 1761, and 1778, and although the members, under Wesley's influence, always returned a decided negative, the constant recurrence of the theme tells its own story.

Insistence on loyalty to the Church of England suited Wesley's own book. As long as he, Charles, and Fletcher, with a handful of others, were the only ordained clergymen connected with the societies, there was not much danger of the rank and file getting the upper hand; the bands and gown were enough to overawe them. But there were intermittent signs of restiveness among the preachers. Some of the lay preachers held the speculative view that any Christian might celebrate the Sacraments, some putting it into practice. The awkward thing was that John Wesley himself had doubts about the apostolic succession. But whether episcopacy were of Divine institution or not, on one point he was and remained clear. Nobody had a right to celebrate the Sacraments, Erasmus or no Erasmus, as long as he received no authorization to do so, either from the Church of England or from Wesley himself. Wesley discarded the substance of the apostolic succession in sending certain men to carry on in America, and the same in Scotland, but not in England.

Wesley did his best to stimulate in his converts the ambition to reach a higher stage in their spiritual careers; it was sometimes called "perfection," sometimes "entire sanctification," but more commonly, at least by Wesley himself, "being renewed in love."²⁰

Wesley and the other prophets of the Evangelical movement succeeded in imposing upon English Christianity a pattern of their own. They succeeded in identifying religion with a real or supposed experience--real or supposed, because in the nature of things you cannot prove the validity of any trance, vision, or ecstasy; it remains something within the mind. Still less can you prove the validity of a lifelong Christ-inspired attitude; in the last resort, all it proves is that certain psychological influences are strong enough to overcome, in a given case, all the temptations towards backsliding which a cynical world affords. England of the early nineteenth century was committed to a religion of experience; you did not base your hopes on this or that doctrinal calculation; you knew.

Wesley must have failed, had he not possessed unlimited energy, a genius for administration, and the power to impose his will on the vast scattered organization. He built up his organization on autocratic lines. It is said that Wesley had very little originality. His organization was built up on ideas borrowed from other societies. This may be true, and the details of Methodist organization may not have been original, but surely the result was original. The architect does not invent his bricks, but his work as a whole may be original though every detail in that work is borrowed. Wesley had one sure sign of genius, the power to recognize at a glance the things that were worth imitating, adapting, or borrowing. Wesley

²⁰Ibid., pp. 540 f.

was not only quick to adopt what was good; he was always equally ready to discard what was bad. Few religious leaders have shown more readiness to be guided by experience. Wesley was a pragmatist. He treated theories, not as answers to problems, answers in which he could rest, but as instruments with which to hammer out the desired result. He was prepared to sacrifice any theory which cramped his evangelical activities. His prejudices against extemporary prayer were the first to be shed. He disliked field preaching, but he was converted by the test of practical results. He also loved discipline and order and disliked irregularities. Every step on the road to schism cost him a pang. He did not like extemporary prayer, he did not like field preaching, he did not like appointing lay preachers, and he did not like ordaining Dr. Coke. In all these cases, his sense of vocation triumphed over his ecclesiastical prejudices.

Wesley had no difficulty in discovering a primitive precedent for the origin of his own societies. These societies arose, as we have seen, from the natural desire of the new converts to be united more closely for mutual help and encouragement. Wesley points out that those to whom the apostles preached were mostly Jews or heathens.

But as soon as any of them were so convinced of the truth, as to forsake sin and seek the gospel of salvation, they immediately joined them together, took an account of their names, advised them to watch over each other, and met these catechumens (as they were then called), apart from the great congregation; that they might instruct, rebuke, exhort, and pray with them, and for them according to their several necessities.²¹

The Love Feasts corresponded to the Agapae and the Watch Nights to the Vigiliae of the Early Church, and the visitors to the sick to the ancient deacons, "for what," asks Wesley, "was Phoebe the Deaconess but such a

²¹Junn, op. cit., p. 171.

visitor to the sick?"²²

Wesley believed that from childhood upward every energy should be focused and every moment concentrated to the one thing which mattered in life, salvation from the wrath to come. It was a gloomy depressing creed, one which divorced grace from nature, and joy from God. Wesley's attitude to class distinctions is yet another illustration of his indifference to all standards, excepting the eternal. For every hour that passed, Wesley felt it necessary to account as accurately as a bank clerk for every dollar paid over the counter. Wesley's irritable comments on the rich cannot be explained by envy. He did not envy them their wealth, for such money as he himself made, he gave away. He had no reason to envy them their birth or breeding, for he himself was a scholar and a gentleman. The rich irritated him because of his unrelenting preoccupation with the problem of salvation. He felt about the rich a kind of despair. Their money made it so easy for them to exploit the pleasures of this world, that it was difficult to persuade them to concentrate on the business of salvation from the wrath to come.

Wesley had little use for mystics and quietists, for he could not square such theories with the necessity of good works and the need for each man to be active in winning his own salvation. For similar reasons, and because of his belief in God's infinite mercy and forgiveness, he could not accept the tenets of Calvinism.

Wesley's whole life is an answer to the charge of ambition. No man would have more enjoyed learned leisure or more delighted in the intercourse of men of talent than he. Yet he deliberately gave his life to the

²²Ibid., p. 171.

common people. His days were spent among the poor. He set himself to bring the masses to Christ, and to that purpose he was faithful for more than half a century. Wealth had no temptation for him. He gave away a great fortune to the suffering and distressed. The violence of the mob and the fierce attacks which so many years issued from the press never caused him to swerve from his work. His desire was to do good, to do as much for the salvation of the world as he could, and do it in the best and wisest way.

Results

Methodism at the death of Wesley numbered in Great Britain and Ireland over seventy thousand members. There were sixty thousand adherents in North American Colonies. Methodism had its cadre, not only of itinerant preachers and local preachers, but of class leaders, band leaders, helpers, stewards, and schoolmasters; it had band-meetings, class-meetings, quarterly meetings, love-feasts over and above its ordinary services. Nominally it was only an aggregation of religious societies organized in various centers. In theory Wesley's societies differed from the rest at that time only in so far as he extended a welcome not only to the Anglicans but to all those who were anxious to flee from the wrath to come. But in fact a church had formed in embryo within the womb of the Establishment, with John Wesley as its visible head.

The teaching of Methodism, with its insistence on frugality, modesty in dress, hard work, and thrift, was already playing its share in the establishment of a sturdy, hard-working, and eventually well-to-do middle class.

John Wesley saved England from the French Revolution. He gave the neglected and oppressed sections of the community ideals, hopes, and consolation for distress, to say nothing of a training in organization. The Classes, Bands, Societies, and Circuits all contributed to the feeling that each individual member had a personal responsibility in the movement. John Wesley gave to the poor labourer, the outcast, and even the criminal (reformed), alongside the thriving tradesman and the intellectual, a place to fill and a job to do. For poverty and pain, he offered the consolation of present ecstasy and the promise of future peace and salvation. And there was the added consolation that only (with very few exceptions) the poor, overworked, and downtrodden could hope for these rewards. The rich might triumph for their three-score years and ten, but beyond the grave was justice.

CHAPTER IV

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PIETISM AND METHODISM

Doctrinal Theology

A perusal of the foregoing chapters reveals many analogies between the Pietism of Spener and Francke and the Methodism of Wesley. An attempt will be made to place them in juxtaposition, so that the elements common to both may stand forth in bolder relief. The points of difference will also be noted as they appear.

A comparison of the background of both movements shows that the social, economic, and religious conditions were pointing toward an impending crisis. That this crisis was met in the form of a religious revival instead of a social upheaval was largely due to the men under consideration. Each leader claimed to be an advocate of the form which the Reformation took in his own land; but while Wesley, with less appreciation for it, sought to supplement it, Spener aimed merely to complete it, because Spener felt that the Protestant Reformation had not completed its work, that the purification of doctrine needed to be followed by the sanctification of life. The alleged goal in both cases was the re-establishment of religion which had fallen into decay, but in Spener's case it was clear that the controlling interest was not religious; but moral; for not a man's relation to God was the important thing, but his character and conduct. The religious conditions of primitive Christianity served as a model and an inspiration.

Pietists and Methodists stood in perfect agreement in regard to the old doctrines of the Church, upon some of which, however, they placed a

different emphasis. The doctrine of the divinity of Christ in connection with the doctrine of the Trinity was emphasized more by Wesley over against his rationalistic foes. An effort was made by both movements to bring God into closer relationship with His creation, for both German orthodoxy and English Deism had virtually placed Him in a position of lofty transcendence. The latter movement considered the teaching that He came into direct relations to man as a form of fanaticism. But, it must be conceded, the religious revivals practically limited the immanence of God to spiritual-minded Christians. The current ideas about man's fall, original sin, and human depravity were retained; and here again Methodism laid greater stress because of the doubts cast upon these dogmas by the Deists, who stood for man's natural worth and ability. Wesley gave the human element of free choice more assertive power than Spener, who still adhered to Luther's definition that man was free only in the external things of life. Through his doctrine of prevenient grace, the English reformer taught that man received a certain measure of free will, so that his salvation depended upon his own free choice of the remedy which God graciously offered to him.¹

The means of grace were interpreted similarly, though receiving less emphasis than the orthodox teaching upon the subject. Theoretically, however, both stood for baptismal regeneration and the necessity of participation in the Lord's Supper. We have seen that the doctrine of the new birth really implied that baptismal regeneration, however essential and efficacious in the case of children dying in infancy, had to be supplemented by a new and conscious vital religious experience. It thus lost

¹Arthur Wilford Nagler, Pietism and Methodism (Nashville, Tenn.: Publishing House M. E. Church, South, c.1918), pp. 120-122.

its position of primary importance. The words which were used in support of the orthodox teaching of the Church should not obscure the trend which the doctrinal emphasis of the revivalists really took. Such words, for example, are found in Wesley's sermon on "The Means of Grace" where he says: "By 'means of grace' I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby He might convey to men preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."² Also at first, in Georgia, both John and Charles Wesley practised trine immersion as was the custom for baptism in the Church of England at that time. Spenser's and Wesley's ideas about the other sacrament, Holy Communion, diverged considerably. Spenser adhered to Luther's position in regarding the Eucharist as a real participation of the body and blood of Christ, while Wesley agreed with Calvin's idea of a spiritual reception. This is brought out clearly by John and Charles Wesley's "Hymns on the Lord's Supper" where we find the assertion that the consecrated elements are more than a mere memorial, more than a sign of Christ's body, that there is something given in the sacrament, that the real presence is spiritual and not carnal, and that the manner whereby the benefits of the sacrament are conveyed to the believer is a mystery.³ Whereas Spenser held that none should communicate without a full assurance of the forgiveness of sins, Wesley merely required that the communicant have a sense of a need of the grace of God to meet human sinfulness and an earnest desire to receive what God is ready to give and to do the will of God. In principle, then, Wesley called all men to the sacrament because he regarded the Lord's Supper as a converting,

²John C. Bowmer, The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism (London, England: Unwin Brothers Ltd., 1951, n.c.), p. 41.

³Ibid., p. 21.

as well as a confirming ordinance, and because of his belief in universal redemption.

The Lutheran confessional was an eyesore to Spener, who desired its abolishment, wherein Wesley would have gladly followed him, notwithstanding his own introduction of a sort of confessional in which members confessed their faults one to another. In its defense he argued that it was not like the Popish confessional, where a single person confessed to a priest.

There was no disagreement among them concerning the doctrine of the Church. Membership in the invisible rather than in the visible Church was regarded as essential to salvation. Each identified the purest expression of that invisible Church with his own denomination. Self-evidencing Scripture was raised to a high position of authority. Its virtual infallibility, however, was neutralized by the doctrine of the Spirit. Of each of the leaders it could be said that he was a man of one book, as Wesley says in the preface to one of his books of sermons where he expresses the desire to be "homo unius libri," a man of one book, the Bible; but Spener's and Francke's position was in greater harmony with the modern historical attitude in its recognition of the different values of diverse portions of Scripture.⁴ Wesley's doctrine of inspiration forced him to accept the Bible as being of about equal value in all its parts. But he, on the other hand, allowed more room for man's rational faculties in the interpretation of Scripture.

The Calvinistic doctrine of limited grace was opposed, the Pietists agreeing with Methodists (the Wesleyan branch) that grace was actually

⁴John Wesley, Sermons on Several Occasions (London: Wesleyan Conference Office J. Alfred Sharp, 1787), p. 8.

offered to all men. Wesley would never have become a Calvinist for he had too overpowering a conviction of the universal love of God. On April 29, 1739, Wesley preached his great sermon on Free Grace, a sermon which was a vigorous attack on Calvinism and contains one trenchant passage:

This is the blasphemy clearly contained in the horrible decree of predestination! And here I fix my feet. On this I join issue with every assertor of it. You represent God as worse than the devil; more false, more cruel, more unjust. But you say you will prove it by Scripture? Hold! What will you prove by Scripture? That God is worse than the devil? It cannot be. Whatever that Scripture proves, it never can prove this; whatever its true meaning be, this cannot be its true meaning. . . . It cannot mean, whatever it mean besides, that the God of truth is a liar. Let it mean what it will, it cannot mean that the Judge of all the world is unjust. No Scripture can mean that God is not love, or that His mercy is not over all His works; that is, whatever it prove beside, no Scripture can prove predestination."⁵

In eschatological matters there was substantial agreement, with the one exception that Wesley taught that judgment did not take place immediately after death. The reality and eternity of hell received greater emphasis among the Methodists because of rationalistic opposition. Wesley believed in the love of God, but he also believed in the hate of God. His heart assured him of God's universal love, freely offered to all mankind. His mind deduced from certain scriptural texts the grim doctrine of God's eternal hatred of those who fail to avail themselves of that offer. Although hell was seldom alluded to in his sermons, the urge to save himself and others from "the worm that dieth not" and "the fire that is not quenched" remained the supreme motive of his life.⁶

⁵Arnold Lunn, John Wesley (Binghamton, N. Y.: Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., c.1929), pp. 156 f.

⁶Ibid., p. 318.

Though Pietism and Methodism both contended for purity of doctrine, they did not make it the main issue, insisting that the acceptance of no article of faith was to be made necessary to salvation. The fundamentals (Wesley disliked the term) were to be emphasized. In this class were included those doctrines which were vitally related to the inner religious life, the others assuming merely a secondary position. Each doctrine was to be tested in a two-fold manner—its derivation from, and harmony with, Scripture; its value to correspond to its close or remote relationship with saving faith. The practical value of a doctrine was thus to be a test of its importance. In this assertion both systems approached the rationalistic declaration that whatever could not be used for the betterment of mankind was mere speculative rubbish. The ethical had more value than the dogmatic, and the subjective factor more than the objective, in the demand that theology be grounded in experience. And the Pietists went farther than the Methodists in asserting that only the twice-born were really able to understand it. In this field the former also restricted the use of natural reason more than the latter would have deemed necessary. The most essential likeness between the two systems is found in the general principle that correctness of life was always to be placed above correctness of doctrine. Wesley would have found himself in perfect sympathy with Spenser's averment that the main thing was the "faith which believes," not the "faith which is believed." Because of the vital importance of this faith to life, its speculative involutions were to be resolved into a plain and simple expression readily understood by all. A study of religious (or other) truth for the sake of truth alone was quite foreign to their interests, still more so to those of their followers. We do not wish to

suggest that the value of learning was not appreciated, for the leaders themselves were learned men, though they did, it must be admitted, depreciate the importance of some fields of knowledge. Methodism was more at fault than Pietism and consequently failed to make a similar impression upon the educated classes. The search for truth was made a means to a practical end, the development of a Christian character.⁷

The way of salvation was the very center about which all other doctrines and interests revolved. This salvation was conceived not merely as a deliverance from hell nor as the assurance of a place in heaven, but as a present change in the soul, tantamount to a present deliverance from sin and a renewal of God's image in the heart. Starting with the doctrine of man's inbred corruption, sincere repentance, including the penitential conflict, was regarded as the first step toward salvation. Because of their own experiences, we find Francke and Wesley insisting upon the importance of penitential pains with greater emphasis than the mild Spener, who even professed that they were not necessary. Though repentance was necessary because it produced the death of the old Adam, and through it man realized his own utter worthlessness, faith alone was viewed as the essential condition of salvation. We thus come to the new-birth experience upon which as a foundation both Pietism and Methodism built the whole superstructure of their systems. In the order of thinking, justification was regarded as coming before the new birth (regeneration), but from the standpoint of time this was not true. Francke placed the most emphasis upon knowing the exact time of conversion. All agreed that baptism created in the child what corresponded to the new birth in the adult, but they hesitated to identify the two. Wesley affirmed that the baptismal rite was nothing

⁷Nagler, op. cit., pp. 124 f.

more than the outward sign of the inward grace, while Spenser declared that it was only the "bath of the new birth."⁸

After a man had truly repented, turned away from sin, crucified the flesh, and turned to God in faith, he was justified--not actually made just (sanctification), but pardoned by God. This act was regarded as instantaneous in so far as it had a beginning. But where the distinctive emphasis of the two movements became significant for their times lay in the tenet that faith included sanctification, though Wesley looked with favor upon the notion of an instantaneous sanctification as an experience. Conversion is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit. Spenser and other Pietists spoke of self-determination, of self-surrender. Though they may have merely wished to emphasize the complete surrender to Christ, they often aroused the suspicion that they believed that conversion depended on self-decision. Since the Pietist thought of self-decision which occurred at a certain moment, he thought of conversion as of an instantaneous act the occurrence of which could be definitely timed. Wesley also attached a great deal of importance to sudden conversion, to the dramatic change from despair to assurance, a change accompanied by unmistakable evidence of God's favor. He was, perhaps, a little too anxious to precipitate conversion, and a little too impatient for immediate results. An itinerant preacher who moves from place to place sows his seed and hopes to reap his harvest within a few brief days. He naturally tends to underestimate the tame and un-sensational work of a village priest living among his flock, and slowly winning their respect for a high ideal by the example of his own life.

⁸Ibid., pp. 126 f.

Because of their insistence upon holiness of life, these revivalists gave their opponents the impression that they were reviving the old doctrine of justification by works. Their emphatic denial took the form of the assertion that good works were of no avail before justification, but were to be regarded only as the fruits of the new life. Though necessary to the continuance of faith, they were not a part of the meritorious cause of salvation. Against a false dependence upon Christ's atonement, which threatened to reduce Luther's doctrine of justification by faith to solifidianism and against the Calvinistic doctrine of irresistible grace, they placed the emphasis upon man's cooperation with God, insisting that his good works are the legitimate expression of a holy life. Wesley quotes the statement of Augustine, "Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis,"⁹ to support his position. Spener, in his desire to meet the fundamental error which he thought had arisen in the church, namely, a misunderstanding of the nature of saving faith which led to an unfortunate divorce between justification and sanctification, emphasized the doctrine of regeneration, and insisted that the all-important thing was the transformation of character through vital union with Christ. Pietism was also somewhat legalistic. Although the Pietists did not attribute any saving power to their pious living, yet by their emphasis on the necessity of sanctification they exposed themselves to the suspicion that their salvation did not rest exclusively on Christ's blood and righteousness. Their zeal seemed to be prompted not by grateful love, as it should have been, but by a sense of stern duty and the fear of missing the final goal.

⁹Ibid., p. 128.

Consequently Pietists had a strictly legalistic code of conduct, especially in matters of adiaphora. The world and everything in it was looked upon as poisonously sinful. Also to be avoided was all art, science, and secular culture. Thus in the very Church that was fostering such a great musical culture, a movement arose to put an end to such worldly practice. This emphasis upon good works, that a Christian must possess a purity of life and a service of love above reproach, brought upon Spener's head the wrath of the orthodox theologians.

Although both movements denied the possibility of a quantitative perfection in the fulfillment of the law, they claimed that a relative perfection was not only possible, but a requirement in the life of the true Christian. As the opponents of Pietism considered this the common ground upon which the various Pietistic groups stood, so the opponents of Methodism agreed that the doctrine of perfection was the folly of the new enthusiasm. But in neither case was indefectibility claimed. Instead it was regarded as a state in which sin did not reign in spite of its presence. It was a perfection of love, not of knowledge nor of attainment.

Luther's doctrine of assurance had been practically forgotten in England as well as in Germany, and its rehabilitation was begun in earnest by Spener and by Wesley. They agreed that the convert was to be sensible (inwardly persuaded) of present pardon (not ultimate salvation). This did not mean salvation by "feeling," for these men hesitated to place much reliance upon man's varying moods. The experience, on the contrary, stood for a clear conviction of acceptance by God produced in the heart by the Spirit. The witness of the Spirit was the privilege of each believer, though he might have justifying faith without it. Spener did

not feel so sure about the sealing of the Spirit, admitting that joy and peace, the usual concomitants of a regenerated heart, were not always present. Wesley was more insistent in his emphasis, though he made a distinction between a clear assurance, which admitted the possibility of doubt and fear, and the full assurance which excluded them. Neither gave a satisfactory explanation of the manner of this divine testimony, but simply accepted it as a fact. They claimed that the fruits which necessarily followed the witness of the Spirit would prove its genuineness. Both movements thus stood for a position quite distinct from that of their respective Churches, which taught that man had sufficient assurance of salvation when he accepted the correct doctrines of the Church and obediently received her ministrations.¹⁰

With all this insistence upon the inner life, it was perfectly natural that tendencies toward a hypochondriacal introspection should appear. This was, however, more a passing phase in the development of Methodism, for the note of joy was certainly one of its most pronounced characteristics. Pietism cannot escape the accusation so easily, notwithstanding the cheering influences which must have radiated from Francke's genial personality.

Any religious emphasis which dwells largely upon the inner life exhibits tendencies which are in harmony with Mysticism, and we have found that Pietism and Methodism were no exceptions to this rule. Though Spener hesitated to express his open appreciation for the Mystics, and Francke energetically opposed their extravagances, both were more in harmony with this religious attitude than they thought. Wesley's attitude was very

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 128 f.

much like that of Francke's. The main element of Methodism was individualism, notwithstanding its social emphasis; and, in harmony with Mysticism, the religious feelings were made immediate. It is easy to be led astray in a general estimate by dwelling too much upon those statements of the revivalists which were ostensibly made to show their agreement with the orthodox teaching of the Church and thus lose sight of an unmistakable trend in the direction of anti-ecclesiasticism and anti-sacerdotalism. The leaders of both movements aimed to be orthodox and succeeded, but only according to their own definitions of orthodoxy. These considerations will help to explain the presence of mystical elements in the systems under discussion. In addition to what has been given in previous chapters, the conclusion may here be drawn that in the use of phrases common to the Mystics, Spener far outstripped Wesley, the latter studiously avoiding them. With both immediacy was a cardinal doctrine in spite of the reservations made to retain the means of grace. Both expressed the idea that man possessed a sense other than reason with which he apprehended the spiritual world. Wesley favored the notion of an infusion of something supernatural (in new birth), which corresponded to Spener's idea of a direct divine illumination of the soul. The more passive Pietism favored certain elements in Mysticism for which Methodism, temperamentally active, had little sympathy. Wesley abhorred a "solitary" religion and had no use for the extravagant form of Quietism with which he came in contact. While Francke had similar predilections, Spener was more inclined to view "stillness" with favor. "Stillness" was the pernicious doctrine of Philip Molther that no ordinance, such as prayer, Bible-reading, attendance at church and Sacrament, was of any avail without

faith and that until Christians had true faith they ought to be "still"; that is, to abstain from the means of grace, as they are called, the Lord's Supper in particular, and that the ordinances are not means of grace, there being no other means than Christ.¹¹ Both Spenser and Wesley agreed that the constituted means of grace were not to be neglected, though contending that God was not slavishly bound to them. Another element common to both found expression in their opposition to the authoritative teaching of the Church that the Holy Spirit was present only with the Church in general and, though given in extraordinary measure in the apostolic age, was then lodged in the Scriptures once for all to work through them and through the Church upon man's heart. Pietists and Methodists taught that the Spirit was present personally in the individual believer. But when special revelations from God were claimed, they were to be tested by Scripture and by experience.¹²

Mystical was also the thought that the being one with Christ--amazing union, as Wesley called it--resulted in the unification of man's personality. In the system of the revivalists the new-birth experience assumed the chief place, corresponding to the importance which the mystical union had with the Mystics.

Spenser was more in harmony with the Mystics in teaching the liability of extreme changes in religious feelings, grounding it upon the thought that God sometimes allowed us to experience absence of joy in order to increase our hunger for Him. Wesley, on the other hand, expressly denied that such experiences were conducive to spirituality, contending that God

¹¹Bowmer, op. cit., pp. 38 f.

¹²Nagler, op. cit., pp. 130 ff.

did not arbitrarily send heaviness and darkness by withdrawing himself from the soul in order to purify it. Notwithstanding numerous assertions to the contrary, Pietism and Methodism, through their chief exponents, showed marked affinities to the Mystical attitude in connection with the doctrine of the new birth, the emphasis upon the supersensual, the principle of unity, direct perceptible inspiration, the inner light, and individualism.¹⁵

Much of Wesley's teaching was in harmony with Spener's doctrine of a theology of the regenerate, but he did not make so much of it. Though he also demanded that theology be grounded in a living experience and claimed that the natural faculties could not teach a man true religion, he nevertheless ascribed greater powers to natural reason.

The doctrine of the millennium exerted a greater influence upon Pietism than upon Methodism. Spener received constant inspiration from the thought of the better times which were imminent. Wesley and, to a lesser degree, Francke were more active in their practical endeavors to hasten the coming of the kingdom.

In the realm of religious toleration Spener and Wesley were shining examples, the latter, it is true, having greater support from the Zeitgeist. Confessionalism and rigid religious opinions were not to stand in the way of Christian fellowship, provided the motives were sincere and the heart was right. They granted that the heathen had sufficient light to know about the reality of Providence and asserted that their condemnation could result only from sin consciously committed. There is a good example of Wesley's religious toleration. Charles Wesley's

¹⁵Ibid., p. 133.

favorite and most gifted son had just joined the Roman Catholic Church, and Charles was grievously distressed.

"I doubt not," writes John Wesley to his brother, "that Sarah and you are in trouble because Samuel has 'changed his religion.' Nay, he has changed his opinion and mode of worship, but not his religion; it is quite another thing. . . . What, then, is religion? It is happiness in God or in the knowledge and love of God. It is faith working by love, producing righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. In other words, it is a heart and life devoted to God. . . . Either he has this religion, or he has not; if he has, he will not finally perish."¹⁴

A final similarity in the doctrinal realm was a mixture of superstition and religion in the matter of sortilege, bibliomancy, vague beliefs in witchcraft and in apparitions, and, with Spenser, even a faint belief in magic and demonology. But this unimportant phase of their thought life simply indicated that they were not in this particular ahead of their times.

Practical Theology

The practical systems which the evangelists reared upon a similar doctrinal foundation also reveal marked points of likeness. If Wesley evinced greater interest in the political movements of the day, Spenser was more energetic in denouncing the evils resulting from the union of Church and State. But they were much alike in their vehement protests against the common public and private vices and in the methods suggested and employed to do away with the evils and to promote the good.

The primitive Church was both model and inspiration, because the Bible was regarded as the divine book of instruction and guidance. Wesley drew upon the customs of the Primitive Church a great deal. One of the

¹⁴Lumm, op. cit., p. 309.

customs he retained was the dividing of the men and the women in church. He also was convinced that apostolic succession was a fable. For Wesley, there were few problems of life that were not covered either by Christ's explicit commandments or a logical deduction from these commandments. In general, the attempt was made to reform the institution through the individual rather than the individual by means of a purified institution. All the elements of life were to contribute, provided they could legitimately be used in the cause of religion. This thought is very important for a correct understanding of both systems, because it will prevent an undue exaggeration of their incidental defects. Since the aim was religious rather than purely theological, and dealt with the will and the emotions rather than with the intellect, and was concerned with the promotion of godliness rather than the establishment of a new institution, we can readily see how certain elements would receive a one-sided emphasis at the expense of others equally important. Practical interests threatened to drive legitimate speculative elements from the field. The supremely intellectual sometimes received scant notice. The spirit of individualism likewise tended to obscure the idea of solidarity.

Besides general recommendations involving the reformation of the clergy, a change in the methods and content of preaching, and greater diligence in pastoral work, much was made of the avowed purpose of stimulating Church service and Church life. There was to be a reformation of religion within, and by means of, the Church, not through separation. But the stated agencies of the Church were regarded as insufficient. This led to the adoption (gradually in the case of Wesley, more premeditatedly in the case of the German reformers) of methods which were generally regarded

as innovations and opposed as such.

Because the Established Churches failed to bring their members into a close bond of religious union, the collegia societatis in Germany and the class meeting in England sought to remedy this deficiency. Wesley was influenced by his oft-repeated principle regarding the necessity of nourishing the spirit of Christian fellowship. Spener's attempt had its origin in the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and in a feeling of despair of making any impression upon the masses or of reforming the Church by simply training the young. The same doctrine, though differently interpreted, influenced the English evangelist, who likewise differed from Spener by asserting and demonstrating that the masses could be reached. Pietism placed its hope in the leavening power of the collegia, trusting that it would gradually spiritualize the Church through the influence of Christian example; while Methodism had bolder and larger hopes, trusting not so much in the power of example as in the active, aggressive proclamation of the gospel to all who would and to some who would not hear. This fact partially explains the difference in the development of the two movements, for even Francke's administrative genius failed to accomplish the extensive results achieved by Methodism. While the Methodist "society" gradually became more inclusive, the Pietist conventicle developed an esoteric character. The latter soon came to be regarded as the special congregation of the saints and in this respect resembled the "select societies" of Methodism.¹⁵

The spiritual exercises were much alike, with the exception that the confessing of brother to brother in the various Methodist meetings

¹⁵Nagler, op. cit., pp. 136 f.

received a different expression in Pietism, which had fallen heir to the Lutheran confessional. The public lay prayer meetings of Wesley differed from those forms of social prayer which were under the direct leading of the clergy, as was the case with Spenser's meetings. The latter failed to use lay help to any great extent, though his theory of the priesthood of believers demanded it, while Wesley was exceptionally successful in that department of his work. It must be admitted, however, that he allowed his laymen little authority in Church government, though they were given exceptional liberty in everything that pertained to worship and the exercise of their religious natures. In the former sphere Spenser theoretically was more advanced, because he advocated greater congregational authority and a fuller recognition of the rights of the common people in Church government. In both movements there was contemplated the shifting of the center of gravity from the clergy and the established Church to the laity and the congregation. Although deliberate separation was repudiated, there were strong tendencies in that direction, for which the leaders were partly responsible. A glance at the two movements from the standpoint of organization will show that the well-developed, though intricate, Methodist organization was better adapted to a separate career than that of Pietism.

The principles which governed the educational efforts of both movements were identical. Whatever differences occurred were merely incidental and need not be considered. They practically agreed that the ultimate aim of education was to build up Christian character after the student had been led to experience living faith. Catechetical instruction was, therefore, of the utmost importance. It was probably more strenuously

pursued in Germany than in England. In an age when the child was ignored, these faint and faulty attempts did credit to the hearts of these men. It is true they failed to understand the child mind, ignored or suppressed his play instincts, and expected too much of the reflective powers of the child; but their attempts in some respects were a start in the right direction. Wesley was often compelled to employ men of little or no education as his lay-preachers. But he did his best to rouse the desire for self-improvement. He met with his preachers to help teach them. He also made up a Christian library, consisting of selections made from the best works on divinity--another proof of his care for the education both of preachers and people. Credit must also go to Wesley and his preachers for much of the pioneer work in elementary education. Wesley's mission to the children began August 24, 1730. It continued, not only without intermission, but with an ever-growing intensity of purpose, until wherever possible Methodism had its Preacher's Classes for children, its Sunday Schools, and at least the beginning of that elementary and higher education which became one of the striking features of more recent times. That Wesley considered the care of children as one of his main duties is proved by the extreme pains he was at to save the School at Kingswood from failure, by his constant references to children encountered in his travels, and by his sermons on the bringing up of children.

So, far from being ignored, learning was deemed of great value; yet none of these leaders made education the highest requirement for the ministry. The primary object was never lost sight of, and that was education of the will rather than of the mind. Men were to be made pious rather than learned. Because one of Wesley's lay preachers, James Wheatley,

who himself was expelled for immoral conduct, brought slanderous accusations against his brethren, Wesley had to conduct a careful examination of the character of the accused brethren. The charges were found to be groundless, but from that time investigation into ministerial character has been one of the fundamental principles of Methodism. It is still made year by year. Wesley himself said that a minister must have his heart in his work. That men were to be made pious rather than learned was even true of Francke's work, in spite of the fact that he made great advances in vocational studies and in the use of the laboratory method. The publication and distribution of tracts, written in a popular style, was characteristic of both movements and proved to be an educational asset of inestimable value.

Philanthropy, with its emphasis upon poor relief, was also a striking characteristic of each movement. The sick were not forgotten, however, and the first weak attempts toward their systematic relief were made. This was especially true of Methodism.

Ascetical tendencies were quite pronounced in both movements. Though the leaders did not go to the extreme of inculcating escape from the world, nature and grace were regarded by them as almost irreconcilable opposites. A sharp distinction was made between the sacred and the secular, the latter being relegated to a subordinate position. Differing slightly in details, they agreed in the main contention that all forms of recreation and pleasure which were not directly useful and did not tend to godliness could find no place in the life of a sincere Christian. Natural man was lightly esteemed because the world was regarded as lying under the curse of Adam's fall. His natural wants and desires, his

worldly ambitions and interests were, therefore, depreciated. The things of this world had value, not in themselves, but as they served a purpose in the great plan of salvation. With the extreme emphasis upon self-denial went hand in hand a puritanical observance of the Sabbath. This ascetical spirit in the revivalists was due, not merely to their theology, but also to a reaction on their part against extreme and widespread worldliness.¹⁶

Pietism and Methodism alike made an advance in discarding a narrow confessionalism, for confessional bonds were broken in the United Societies as well as in the collegia pietatis. Spener even made definite suggestions in regard to some outward form of union, but this does not seem to have entered Wesley's mind. Instead he looked forward to the time when the revival of religion with which he was connected would spread to all parts of the world, bringing in its train a general unity of spirit.

The emphasis upon missions was strong. With Spener it was hardly more than an idealistic vision connected with his eschatological doctrine. Wesley was more in harmony with Francke in attempting actual Christian conquest of the foreign field. If little was accomplished, it must be remembered that these efforts were among the first made in the realm of Protestant missions.

This short comparison shows that Spener and Francke anticipated Wesley in the most important parts of his theological message, the ethical emphasis, and subjectivism; that most of the principles at the basis of Methodism had their analogies in Pietism; and that many of Methodism's

¹⁶Ibid., p. 140.

institutions and practices found a precedent in the German revival.

Conclusion

As has been seen in greater detail in the chapters of this thesis, the conditions of the times were extremely favorable for the rise of the movements of Pietism and Methodism. Pietism was the answer, although going to extreme, to the formalistic orthodoxy which had sprung up in Germany in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Methodism, which also went farther than originally intended, was nevertheless the answer to England's problem of rationalism and dead church life of the early eighteenth century.

Neither one of these movements intended to break away from the church and become separate sects. They were interested only in improving the conditions in the church which they thought needed improving, and they did need improving. Both movements stressed the personal side of religion to obtain these results. That was what was lacking in the church at that time. However, they went too far.

Because both of these movements stressed the personal side of religion, and because neither one intended to break away from the church, but merely reform it from within, they were similar. The similarity of the two is also found in the fact that they were both the results of their times. Both Spenser and Wesley were influenced by many of the same things, another reason why people see much similarity in the two movements.

Although there was much similarity in these two movements, it would nevertheless be incorrect to say that Wesley, because he came later, was trying to imitate Spenser. In spite of their similarities, both Pietism

and Methodism were distinct products of their respective countries. They also had different results. Pietism as a movement soon died out. Methodism broke away from the church and became more than a mere movement. It became another denomination and is one of the largest in America today.

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