

# History of the Reformation

## Moravians and John Wesley

- Evangelicalism
  - Evangelicalism itself, I believe, is quintessentially North American phenomenon, deriving as it did from the confluence of Pietism, Presbyterianism, and the vestiges of Puritanism.
  - Evangelicalism picked up the peculiar characteristics from each strain –
    - warmhearted spirituality from the Pietists (for instance),
    - doctrinal precisionism from the Presbyterians, and
    - individualistic introspection from the Puritans –
  - even as the North American context itself has profoundly shaped the various manifestations of evangelicalism: fundamentalism, neo-evangelicalism, the holiness movement, Pentecostalism, the charismatic movement, and various forms of African-American and Hispanic evangelicalism.

*Randall Balmer (2002). The Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism. Westminster John Knox Press. pp. vii–viii*

- Background – Pietism
  - Exhausted with inter-Protestant dogmatic fights
    - Scholasticism - rigorous concern for theological systematization
  - No confidence in simple confessional belief
    - Head knowledge
    - Dead Orthodoxy
  - Focus on the emotional life
    - Separation of head and heart (artificial distinction)
    - De-emphasis on the confessions
    - Anti-institutional (small groups)
    - Personal Bible study
    - Different hermeneutic
      - How did the text make you feel?
  - Influence on new theological movements
    - Moravians
    - Wesleyans
- Moravians
  - *Unitas Fratrum* – United Brethren in Bohemia
    - Followers of John Hus in Central Europe (1369-1415)
    - Organized in 1457 (Unity of Christian Brethren). Greatly influenced by two Eastern Orthodox Bishops.
    - By 1517 there were 200,000 members with 2 printing presses and their own hymnals, catechism and Bibles
    - From the beginning felt Christianity was a religion of the heart
    - Rome constantly persecuted them.
  - Moravian Church and Martin Luther
    - The Moravians felt a kinship with Luther's reforms.
    - They felt the doctrine taught by Hus was at least equal to Luther's 95 thesis
    - Luther refused their fellowship on the basis of their lack of emphasis on Justification
  - Moravians continued to grow and prosper
    - 1618 – they numbered about 3 million souls.

- The 30 Years War and its aftermath. (The Hidden Seed)
  - 1620 – Catholic armies finally defeated Bohemian army
  - Kingdom was forcibly re-Catholicized
  - 30 Years War – systematic effort to destroy Protestantism
    - 75% of population was lost
- Moravian churches went underground
- Renewed Moravian church
  - Count Nicholas Von Zinzendorf (1700 – 1760)
    - Godson of Jacob Spener, founder of Pietism
    - Studied in the University of Halle (hotbed of Pietism)
    - Inherited a large estate in southeastern Germany
    - 300 Moravian refugees moved to his estate in 1722
    - Established the village of Herrnhut
  - Education, Christian unity, Charity, missions and Christ centered behavior was the focus.
  - Practice and doctrine
    - Pacifism, no oaths, no accumulated wealth
    - Pietist influence of Zinzendorf
- Herrnhut Model
  - Zinzendorf organized the Moravians into a communal Christian living
    - Aug 1727 – Experienced a “Pentecost-like” transformation
    - The “learned to love one another”
  - Continual prayer
  - Daily devotional – Watchwords
  - Emphasis on worship
  - Communal living with simple lifestyle
    - Assistance in sanctification
    - Christian training for own children as well as others in community
  - Welcoming of Christians from different confessional backgrounds
  - Spread “diaspora societies” – 100’s of renewal groups to operate within existing churches in Europe
    - Encourage personal prayer and worship, Bible study, confession of sins, mutual accountability
- Moravian Missions
  - One of the most notable features of Moravian living was spreading their concepts of Christian living
  - The 1<sup>st</sup> Protestant group to focus on external missionary work
    - Following the model of the great missionaries of the early church
    - Spreading the Gospel to the Celts (Patrick), the Goths (Boniface), etc.
    - Great emphasis on reaching slaves and native peoples
  - By 1760, Moravian missionaries had sent missionaries all over the world
    - North America – American Indians (Mohicans, Cherokees)
    - Caribbean – St Thomas
    - South America
    - Africa
    - China

- 1741 – Zinzendorf established a mission in the colony of Pennsylvania – named Bethlehem
- Moravian Missions
  - On one mission trip to Georgia, Moravian missionaries ministered to an Anglican who was trying to spread the gospel to north America
    - Great storm at sea where there was great panic that the ship would be lost
    - One group of Moravian missionaries calmly prayed, singing worship songs, unafraid of dying
  - Two years later, this Anglican was discouraged from having failed in Georgia and North Carolina
    - Encouraged to visit a Moravian society meeting in Aldersgate Street in London
    - Was spiritually converted
  - His name was John Wesley
    - Became the Father of Methodism
- John Wesley
  - John was born June 28, 1703, the 12th of 19 children
    - Parents were Samuel and Susanna (Samuel was an Anglican Rector of Epworth)
  - Susanna was the greatest influence
    - 1. Independent
    - 2. Disciplined
    - 3. Great teacher
    - 4. Strength
    - 5. Probably the Arminian influence in John's life
  - Educated at Oxford
    - Ordained in 1725
    - Returned to Oxford as fellow in 1727
- Charles Wesley
  - Charles born March 29, 1707, 15th of 19 children
  - Studied at Oxford also
  - Met with a few like-minded students for devotion, study and prayer.
    - Their purpose was to encourage each other to holy, disciplined lives
    - Fellow students derisively called them “the holy club”, Bible moths, Bible bigots, Methodists, etc.
    - Visited hospitals and prisons
    - Delivered medicine, Bibles, tracts
    - Celebrated communion in jail
  - John joined the club when he returned as fellow and soon became its leader
    - George Whitefield was also a member
  - Read William Law and became serious about personal conduct
- Mission to Savannah
  - Both John and Charles sailed as Anglican clergymen for America in 1735 to convert the Indians
  - John preached and Charles was on the Governors staff
    - Conditions were intolerable
    - The Christians themselves were unconverted

- John was miserable.
  - 1738 – the brothers returned to England
    - The mission was a total failure;
  - Both brothers came to the conclusion they were trying to attain heaven by their own works but that they were unconverted themselves.
    - “I went to America, to convert the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me? who, what is He that will deliver me from this evil heart of mischief? I have a fair summer religion.” –Journal, January 24, 1738.
- Conversions
  - Charles’ “conversion”.
    - Depressed & beaten, he actually visited William Law him for advice even though Law knew nothing of the gospel.
    - Impressed with the Moravians so he visited Zinzendorf in Saxony.
    - Sought advice from many godly people.
    - Studied Luther on Galatians
  - John was “converted” through agency of a humble mechanic who knew and preached the way of salvation at the Aldersgate Moravian mission.
    - “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.” –Journal, May 24, 1738
- Moravian Influence
  - John Wesley, so impressed by the Moravians, visited Zinzendorf
  - Adopted small group Bible studies
    - Because of “priesthood of all believers”
    - Both movements gave women greater freedom to speak publically
  - Eventually Wesley and Zinzendorf had a falling out
    - Over differing ideas of sanctification
  - Zinzendorf
    - All holiness belongs to Christ
    - Christ is the sole author of sanctification
  - Wesley
    - All holiness is made possible by Christ
    - Sanctification is the result of Christ and humans working in partnership
- Wesley’s Methods
  - To John Wesley, sanctification was “man’s response to God”
  - Christians can enjoy “entire sanctification” in this life
    - Christian perfection – loving God, neighbors, meekness and lowliness of heart, abstaining from all appearance of evil
  - Following the “methods” were indispensable in the Christian life
    1. To meet once a week, at the least.
    2. To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reason.
    3. To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour, with singing or prayer.
    4. To speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt, since our last meeting.
    5. To end every meeting with prayer, suited to the state of each person present.

- 6. To desire some person among us to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest, in order, as many and as searching questions as may be, concerning their state, sins, and temptations.
  - Collected one penny per person per meeting to build finances
- Wesley's Preaching
  - They never thought of themselves as anything but Church of England men
  - Because they were "Methodists" they were denied Anglican pulpits
  - At urging of George Whitefield, they began open field preaching
    - "I look upon all 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." –Journal, June 11, 1739
    - He preached to as many as 20,000 at a time in open fields
  - Moravian influence
    - Taught them the value of small group Bible studies
    - Studies were well structured with much personal testimony, confessions, Bible study and collections.
    - Subjects concerned inward holiness.
    - To the Wesley's, Christianity was a "religion of the heart"
  - Suffered severe persecution
- Wesley's doctrines
  - Basis of theological development (the Quadrilateral)
    - The first authority is scripture
    - "Let tradition have its place and its due honour"
    - Without Reason, we cannot understand the essential truths of Scripture
    - Apart from scripture, experience is the strongest proof of Christianity
  - Wesleyan-Arminianism –
    - "Justification by faith alone".
      - True faith is a faith that works.
    - General redemption – caused a rift with Whitefield.
      - Whitefield taught particular redemption.
    - Original sin
      - taught as having caused partial degeneration of human nature
      - salvation as requiring free cooperation with the divine gift of grace
  - Necessity of New Birth for salvation
  - Perfectionism
    - The "drive for holiness" in both public and private life is the central purpose of redemption
    - Not just the simple assurance of salvation
    - Spreading scriptural holiness over the lands
      - I John 2:12-14 is taken as spiritual progression
        - Little children (sins forgiven). . . Fathers (overcome evil one).
    - I Peter 4:1,2 – Christ suffered that we might no longer live in sin
    - Roman 6:1,2 – How can we who died to sin still live in it
    - I John 5:18 – no one who is born of God sins
    - Holiness is the same a perfectionism

- Wesley's Contributions
  - Organization
    - They were not great theologians; they were great churchmen.
    - They wrote an enormous body of literature in the form of tracts and pamphlets
    - They perfected the small group teaching method by printing study guides
    - They used lay ministers to preach and administer the sacraments
      - 1784 – John Wesley, in response to shortage of priests, just began ordaining them himself.
  - After his death 1791, Methodist societies separated from the Church of England
    - Forming the Free Church of England – 1844
    - Holiness Churches come from Methodism
  - Charles Wesley's Hymns
    - Methodism was characterized by enthusiastic congregational singing
    - Charles wrote the words to more than 2,000 hymns.
      - “And Can It Be That I should Gain”
      - “Christ The Lord Is Risen Today”
      - “Come Thou Long Expected Jesus”
      - “Hark The Herald Angels Sing”
      - “Jesus Lover Of My Soul”
      - “Love Divine All Loves Excelling”
      - “O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing”
      - “Rejoice, The Lord Is King”
      - “Soldiers Of Christ, Arise”
    - The first Methodist hymnal had 550 hymns every one of which was written by Charles
  - Methodism in America
    - George Whitefield, The Missionary to America
    - Participation in the English and American 1<sup>st</sup> Great Awakening
    - Frontier enthusiasm – “New light” which excites the soul to live for God
    - Camp meetings
    - Circuit Riders