

e. Summary:

With the exception of some Pentacostal bodies and a couple of sect/cult groups, the Baptist bodies have been the best growth groups of this century. Their early growth in New England and the middle colonies and further rapid expansion on the frontiers gave them a grip on the total American population and with the varying views of church, etc., there is or was virtually a Baptist church for anyone. They have been less subject to peer pressure and hierarchical authority although not totally immune. The Baptist bodies have tended to be missions and evangelism minded and have recorded growth in both these endeavors. REgarding the intrustions of unbelief, etc., our notes will carry us there in a further section.

6. The Methodist Community

a. Historical notes:

Although there were Methodists in the colonies before the revolution the church as a group is a post-revolutionary development. Wesley had refused to leave the Anglican church and had continued his work in spite of many impositions placed upon him by the parent body. He did not favor a new church but championed the idea of a "church within a church" working to make the older body evangelical again. He was unhappily forced to realize that a new order was needed in the colonies following the war and with reluctance gave his blessing to this adventury. The Methodist church, therefore, was founded in the colonies and actually went back to England after Wesley's death. The revolutionary leaders were Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke and the formation of the order came in 1784. Wesley made it possible for the locals to perform ordination and the Methodist body grew quickly...by 1798 it had experience a 7-fold growth in membership. It would continue this well into the next century and was, in fact, the dominant growing religious community of the 19th century. Methodism has slumped in recent years...liberalism has taken a dreadful toll of its energies and resources...and gives a grim picture of what happens when truth is sacrificed for any/every means.

b. Characteristics:

In general the following quality ideas describe Methodism as it has been historically known:

(1) simplified theology: essentially the practical Arminianism of Wesley with the aim of perfectionism and thed expression of integrity in all of life.

(2) episcopal control: godly men working for the