

The Decline of Methodism
an analysis of religious commitment and organisation

A thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy.

by

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This thesis is dedicated
to my wife.

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Preface

Samuel Johnson once said of literature "It is amazing how little there is in the world". Like any aphorism worth of recall, Johnson's complaint contains both a great measure of truth and of falsity. The truth of Johnson's amazement must be a very common experience of the sociological researcher and it has certainly been a problem to plague the research I have carried out over the last four years. One is continually working with assumptions and hypotheses for which there are insufficient data: questions remain unanswered, theories, unproven. Historical, sociological, contemporary evidence is frequently narrow, suspect or partially relevant to the problems at hand.

The aphorism, when applied to the field of the sociology of religion, is also largely false. A deceptively simple question about the strength of the Methodist Church in England leads to questions of ever increasing complexity about the historical development of Methodism, about British society, about religion in the social structure, about the nature of man and his place in the universe. A simple question leads to a broad horizon of problems and uncertainties. The contrast between the researcher's limited, specialized knowledge and his faulty skills and the vastness of the subject matter creates, at best, humility, at worst, a crippling doubt.

As a result of this disquieting complexity and richness, the sociologist who probably started research with clear-cut definitions of his role finds himself not only "fallen among secular theologians" - as David Martin has observed - but fallen among historians, economists, philosophers, methodologists and logicians. The interaction of these specialisms is both exciting and threatening. The subject matter of sociology becomes blurred and the sociologist's self-conception indistinct. He finds himself relying on the knowledge and data of other specialists in other disciplines. The danger is that his performance in these other domains may be less than amateurish. It is to be expected, therefore, that the theologian will complain that my account of Wesleyan theology has condensed a multitude of dogmatic subtelties; the historian, that my treatment of ecclesiastical and social history is cavalier. My defence must be that I have at least listened attentively to their complaints; that I am neither theologian nor historian and that my intentions have lain elsewhere.

The implicit subject of the thesis is the problem of religion in a modern, industrial society. Given the nature of my data, the explicit subject is the decline of the Wesleyan ethos and the decline of the Methodist Church. In addition, I have attempted to compare Methodism in England and America.

The analysis of the decline of Methodism is conducted at two

theoretical levels. In part one of the thesis, the first theoretical level is that of the social actor and is concerned with the nature of religious belief, practice and experience. In this case, religious decline is conceived as a departure from the early standards of Methodism. In part two of the thesis, the second theoretical level is that of social organization. At this level attention switches to the organisational problems of recruitment and ecumenicalism. One aspect of organizational decline is the failure to recruit new members and the inability to integrate splinter groups which emerge either in opposition to or in support of ecumenicalism. The final part of the thesis compares contemporary Methodism in America and Britain and provides concluding discussion of the decline of Methodism.

Fortunately, the lone sociologist in the domain of research problems and uncertainties is a myth. He has both mentors and fellow travellers. In my research, I am heavily indebted to my supervisors, Dr. A.P.M. Coxon and Mr. R. Towler for their guidance, interest and encouragement. Chapters 2, 5 and 9 have benefitted from enjoyable collaboration with Mr. M. Hill. I am grateful to Mr. B. Foster, Mr. R. Stark, Dr. J. Kent and Dr. T. Ling for their comments on and criticism of early drafts of the thesis. For their permission to study Methodism in Leeds and their full support of the research, I am indebted to Revs. W. Walker Lee, John Banks and J.M. Turner. My colleagues and students at Aberdeen have made an unwitting, but significant contribution

to the last stages of the thesis. My deepest appreciation is for my wife's patience and sanity.

Finally, important sections of the thesis have appeared in B. Turner "Institutional Persistence and Ecumenicalism in Northern Methodism" in D. Martin (ed.) A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain, 2, 1969; M. Hill and B. Turner "The Laity and Church Unity", New Christian, 93, 1969; B. Turner, "Belief, Ritual and Experience: the case of Methodism", Social Compass, 26, 1969.

Other aspects of the research are to appear in B. Turner "Discord in Modern Methodism", Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, 38, 1970; M. Hill and B. Turner "John Wesley and the Origins and Decline of Ascetic Devotionalism" in M. Hill (ed.) A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain (forthcoming).

Errata

Preface

p. i.

"worth"

worthy

X p. ii.

"subtelties"

subtleties

p. vii.

"denominationanal"

denominational

p. vii.

"ineficiency"

inefficiency

Chapter 1.

p. 1

"chequered"

checkered (Am. sp. in
Glock)

X p. 3

"unproblematic"

unproblematic

X p. 6

"familialism"

"familialism"

p. 7

"(quasociologist)"

(qua sociologist)

p. 9

"if"

is

Chapter 2.

p. 9

"soziologe"

soziologie

p. 14

"though"

thought

p. 17

"ulitmatereality"

ultimate reality

p. 18

"ad"

as

p. 18

"proceeding"

preceding

p. 18

"As"

as

p. 21

"permissable"

permissible

p. 21

"faiclited"

facilitated

p. 21

"ex aple"

example

p. 22	"twoards"	-	towards
p. 22	"experiences"	-	experience
p. 22	"Belief"	-	belief
p. 26	"compreshensive"	-	comprehensive
p. 30	"unchangin"	-	unchanging
p. 30	"Buddihms"	-	Buddhism
p. 38	"wererecollected"	-	were collected
p. 40	"wolliness"	-	woolliness
p. 42	"boudaries"	-	boundaries
<u>Chapter 3.</u>			
p. 44	"ofr"	-	for
p. 47	"haveing"	-	having
p. 47	"sixe"	-	size
p. 52	"difinitions"	-	definitions
p. 53	"n ture"	-	nature
p. 55	"divices"	-	devices
p. 57	"to"	-	too
p. 60	"survey"	-	surveys
p. 62	"compormise"	-	compromise

Chapter 4.

p. 84	insert "emphasize"	-	
p. 84	"reaced"	-	reacted
p. 85	"romoved"	-	removed
p. 86	"In"	-	in

	p. 92	"Wedley's"	-	Wesley's
	p. 93	"workd"	-	works
	p. 93	"though"	-	thought
X	p. 95	"other-worldy"	-	other-wordly
	p. 95	"meanint"	-	meaning
	p. 96	"competative"	-	competitive
	p. 101	"Thomson"	-	Thompson
	<u>Chapter 5.</u>			
	p. 113	delete "and"	-	
	p. 113	"eithical"	-	ethical
	p. 114	"alter"	-	altar
	p. 116	"sincs"	-	sins
	p. 117	"apirit"	-	spirit
	p. 126	"on"	-	only
	p. 128	"indicator"	-	indicator
	p. 128	"fellowship"	-	fellowship
	p. 132	"strengtened"	-	strengthened
	p. 133	"arguement"	-	argument
	p. 134	"fabour"	-	favour
	<u>Chapter 6.</u>			
	p. 144	"Whitfield"	-	Whitefield
	p. 144	"Whit"	-	Whitefield
X	p. 145	"especially"	-	especially
	p. 146	delete "The divergence of theology"	-	

p. 146	"freedome"	-	freedom
p. 147	"onaa"	-	on a
p. 147	"exhuberant"	-	exuberant
p. 150	"connexction"	-	connection
p. 152	"expertions"	-	exertions
p. 153	"weare"	-	we are
p. 154	"examining"	-	examining
p. 156	"extravagent"	-	extravagant
p. 157	"Lord' "	-	Lord's
p. 157	"see"	-	sea
p. 159	"artillary"	-	artillery
p. 161	"compex"	-	complex
p. 163	"disappeardd"	-	disappeared
p. 165	"exhuberant"	-	exuberant
p. 167	"more"	-	mere
p. 167	"sould"	-	soul
X p. 169	"Ecumenicalism"	-	Ecumenicalism
<u>Chapter 7.</u>			
p. 179	"Chamerlayne"	-	Chamberlayne
p. 181	"would supported"	-	would have supported
p. 188	"symetrical"	-	symmetrical
p. 190	"bisic"	-	basic
X p. 191	"anone way"	-	a one-way
X p. 192	"are"	-	as
p. 192	"speical"	-	special

p. 193 "donomination" - denomination

p. 197 'after "Methodists" insert "saw the merger of Primitive, United and Wesleyan Methodists"

X p. 199 between conflict centralization" insert "over"

p. 202 "they" - the

Chapter 8.

p. 210 delete "first"

p. 213 "is" - in

? X p. 214 "Churc" - Church

p. 216 "borken" - broken

p. 219 "assurnace" - assurance

p. 220 "Toughton" - Stoughton

p. 220 "Haprer" - Harper

Chapter 9.

p. 244 "alters" - altars

p. 245 after first sentence of first paragraph insert
"Since the Fellowship favoured unity with Anglicanism, it had little to protest against and the Fellowship supported other groups working for unity. In fact the Fellowship saw unity as a far broader objective than re-union with the Church of England".

p. 249 "strenghtened" - strengthened

p. 253 "NFC" - NLC

p. 254 "ton" - to

p. 257 "an" - and

p. 259 "Swanick" - Swanwick

p. 259 "Swanick" - Swanwick

p. 259 "Swanick" - Swanwick
 p. 261 "possible the" - possible the

Chapter 10.

p. 267 "Society" - society
 p. 269 "other" - others
 p. 271 "connexion" - connection
 p. 271 " an an" - as an
 p. 271 "neopotism" - nepotism
 X p. 272 "resources" - resources
 p. 272 "toevaluate" - to evaluate
 p. 276 "mornint" - morning
 p. 279 "dundamentalist" - fundamentalist
 p. 281 "conccern" - concern
 p. 282 "declinging" - declining
 p. 284 "Methodists" - Methodist
 p. 285 "Les" - Lee

Chapter 11.

p. 298 "pluraastic" - pluralistic
 p. 301 "o" - of
 p. 308 delete "it is particularly subject to conformist activity".
 p. 308 delete "not"
 p. 309 "on" - only

p. 315 "e sentially" - essentially
p. 327 insert "Weber's analysis it is necessary to turn
attention away from...."

p. 329 "prusuit" - pursuit

p. 331 "virtuoso" - virtuosi

p. 333 "They" - The

p. 335 "Chost Dance" - Ghost Dance

p. 340 Insert "compromise led to an intra-organizational"

x p. 342 "Simply" - simple

p. 342 "issuse" - issues

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p. 385 "Hill, M., Wakeford, P. - Hill, M. and Turner B.
Turner, B."

p. 389 "Spriro" - Spiro

Abstract

The thesis examines the decline of Methodism at two levels of analysis, namely individual religious commitment and church organization. Religious commitment is postulated to consist of three core dimensions of belief, practice and experience. Sociologists have traditionally argued that, while religious ritual presupposes a system of beliefs, involvement in communal ritual reaffirms and strengthens shared beliefs. One consequence of this theoretical focus on belief and practice has been that their important relationships with religious experience have been somewhat neglected. It is argued in the thesis that experience, like practice, confirms religious belief, while ritual can stimulate and foster powerful emotive experiences. On the basis of this conceptual framework, the decline of Methodist commitment is traced historically in terms of these dimensions of religiousness.

The curtailment of the Methodist emphasis on personal experience and the undermining of disciplined personal and public practice resulted in uncertainty of belief. This decline may be understood as a withdrawal from a systematic and intense involvement in the path to salvation to a style of personal religiosity which is entirely congruent with the day-to-day needs of economic subsistence, familial

and social adjustment. The transition from "virtuoso" to "mass" religious styles involves a progressive accommodation of religious standards to essentially secular ones. The thesis draws upon survey data of members of the Methodist Church in the Methodist District of Leeds to substantiate the claim that the contemporary religious commitment is characterized by mass religiosity.

In its analysis of religious organizations, the sociology of religion has relied heavily upon the Church-sect typology, but within the last decade there has been considerable criticism of the typology. The thesis reviews some aspects of this criticism, especially as it applies to the study of Methodism, and argues that an important aspect of sectarian schism and organizational conflict within Methodism can be seen as attempts to resolve the dilemmas of centralization and decentralization.

The Church-sect typology has pointed to the distinction between inherited and converted membership in religious organizations. This distinction is employed to examine the decline in membership of the Methodist Church. One major problem in the present situation is the church's inability to recruit new members either by conversion or by training.

The severe reduction in membership is an important determinant of ecumenism and church leaders have argued that ecumenism will create

a situation in which the church can rationalize its structure by closing redundant churches and by limiting unnecessary denominational competition. Church mergers, however, generate acute organizational problems. Inter-organizational mergers produce intra-organizational conflicts because ecumenism requires compromise and threatens denominational and chapel autonomy.

In an attempt to combat inefficiency, Methodism has closed small, redundant churches in favour of larger congregations. The thesis considers the view that religious commitment becomes weakened in large, impersonal and bureaucratic churches and finds that there is little evidence to suggest that size of church is an important organizational variable.

The thesis concludes by comparing and contrasting religious commitment among Yorkshire and Californian Methodists. Although important criticism of Herberg's thesis has been made during the last decade, the criticism has frequently been parochial in its perspective. Cross-culturally, the Herberg thesis remains one of the major theoretical guidelines for understanding the differences between religion in America and Britain. Chapter eleven reports survey data comparing Californian and Yorkshire Methodists in terms of religious belief, practice and experience. On all three dimensions, Yorkshire

Methodists are more committed. In terms of religious beliefs, the religious orientation of Californian Methodists is activist and pragmatic, whereas the Yorkshire Methodist orientation is decidedly credal.

Part 1

Religious Commitment

Chapter 1.Contemporary Problems in Sociology of Religion -
reasons for research in Methodism.

Most textbooks in the sociology of religion start with some reference to the chequered career of the discipline. Glock for instance noted that

Sociological inquiry into religion has had a chequered career. At times it has been central to the most important work being done in sociology...., the golden era of Troeltsch, Weber and Durkheim at the turn of the century. At other times, notably during the period between World Wars I and II, religion has apparently been considered too insignificant a social force to warrant serious attention. (1)

While in the late fifties there were signs of a revival of sociological interest in religion², Glock felt that without adequate consolidation of theory the development of the discipline would be jeopardised. The blame for the inadequacies in sociology of religion was, in those days, laid at the door of functionalism. Glock criticized sociologists like Kingsley Davis for utilizing theories of religion in primitive society to analyze religion in modern society without introducing qualifications about the differentiation of modern society and religion. It seems that Kingsley Davis was a popular target; one finds Merton attacking Davis and Moore³ for

The large, spaceless and timeless generalizations about the integrative functions of religion (4)

In the late fifties, therefore, sociologists of religion felt that a breakthrough in the systematic study of religion required a critique of existing functionalist theories and a search for the functional alternatives of religion in modern, differentiated society⁵.

The rebirth of the sociology of religion does not appear to be abortive. Journals, symposia and readers in the sociology of religion continue to multiply in the sixties. Yet behind this apparent renaissance of interest there lies a deep anxiety that the discipline has failed to incorporate the full scope and significance of sociology of religion as set out by Weber and Durkheim. The sociology of religion has still to overcome the problem of its "chequered career". The vanguard of modern criticism has been led by Berger and Luckmann.

If functionalism was the butt of criticism in the fifties, many sociologists today lay the blame for theoretical weakness at the door of the Church itself. Berger and Luckmann argued in 1963 that the absence of any theoretically significant sociology of religion between the early 1920's and late 1950's resulted from close collaboration with ecclesiastical organizations. Such a sociology is dominated by concern for the pragmatic problems of organizational decline, clergy recruitment and adequate financing.

Applied sociology of religion, especially religious sociology in Catholic countries, fails to ask the important questions which were built into sociology of religion by Weber and Durkheim:

It avoids questions that go beyond the immediate pragmatic concerns of the employer (since such questions are not amenable to treatment by the methods utilized) and it legitimates the "scientific" respectability of the enterprise (since these methods are acceptable precisely to the most rabidly positivistic scientism outside the churches). (6)

The implication of Church-oriented sociology is that the sociology of religion is relegated to the margins of sociology proper. It is this implication which Berger and Luckmann wish to negate by expanding the concerns of sociology of religion.

Basically Berger and Luckmann advocate two solutions to the present restricted basis of sociology of religion. The first solution may be seen as unproblematic since it involves an insistence on comparative religious studies. A return to the hey-day of Weberian sociology simply requires a shift of focus away from an exclusive concern for Christianity to a comparative study of religious forms in Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism, for example. While such a re-orientation of interests is wholly desirable in the interests of the scope of study, it does raise difficult issues which are related to the second solution. Comparative sociology of religion raises the issue of a broad definition of religion which will permit comparative analysis⁷. The second solution which is presented by

Berger and Luckmann involves a definition of religion which borrows heavily from developments in the sociology of knowledge. It is interesting to note in passing that the associations between the sociology of religion and sociology of knowledge have a nostalgic quality since both were inseparable in the early sociology of religion.

For Berger and Luckmann, sociology of knowledge and religion are both concerned with the human processes of constructing systems of meaning and with the processes of "world-maintenance"⁸. The creation of meaning is the characteristic activity of man since his biologically "unfinished" nature demands the cultural development of his environment⁹. In order for the world to become habitable it requires suitable definition; it needs to be "rounded out" with culture. Traditionally, religion has been the major institution by which such meaning - systems have been generated and maintained.

✓ Religion makes sense of the world and of the individual's biography by explaining disasters, chaos and death. A major concern of the sociology of religion, therefore, must be with the development of theodicies. Religious belief systems are distinguishable from secular belief systems by the particular nature of "the sacred":

Religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established. Put differently, religion is cosmization in a sacred mode. By sacred is meant here a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man yet related

to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience. (10)

Berger's broad definition of religion draws heavily on Durkheim's distinction between the sacred and the profane, the phenomenologist's treatment of "knowledge" and from the functionalists' usage of the sacred and legitimation¹¹. The definition has a number of important consequences. The task of the sociology of religion

is to analyze the cognitive and normative apparatus by which a socially constituted universe (that is "knowledge" about it) is legitimated. Quite naturally, this task will include the analysis of both the institutionalized and non-institutionalized aspects of this apparatus. (12)

In addition, the sociology of religion will go beyond the traditional areas of analysis:

the sociology of religion will also have to deal with other legitimating systems, whether one wishes to call these religious or pseudo-religious, that are increasingly important in a secularized society (such as scientism, psychologism, Communism and so forth) (13).

Few sociologists of religion would wish to deny that Church-oriented sociology is narrow and frequently trivial or that Berger's approach to sociology of religion is valuable. A sociology of knowledge perspective on religion provides a broad scope of studies and a battery of fruitful hypotheses. Yet one interesting consequence of this perspective is to put the sociologist who studies the

Christian church on the defensive. Dhooge commented recently

There can be no doubt about it that Church-related research is in a rather uncomfortable position nowadays. (14)

Berger, Luckmann and others have placed an onus of justification on the shoulders of sociologists who wish to continue analyzing institutionalized religion. In order to justify research into Methodism, two issues are raised. Firstly, certain problems in specifying the boundaries of "religion" need discussion. Secondly, given the paucity of research into institutionalized religion in Britain, continued Church-oriented sociology cannot be viewed as wholly unwarranted.

The problem which still faces the sociology of knowledge perspective towards religion is that it is frequently impossible to differentiate between religious and secular universes of meaning and consequently to demarcate the area of social interaction which is of specific interest to the sociologist of religion. The reductio ad absurdum of this problem of boundaries finds its expression in Luckmann's The Invisible Religion¹⁵ where, under the heading of "themes" in modern religion, he includes "individualism", "sexuality" and "familialism". At this extreme, sociologists face the same definitional problems of the theologian who wants to postulate "ultimate concern" as the essence of religion. Unfortunately, few or no

criteria have been forthcoming to differentiate secular from religious ultimate concerns. It is instructive that Berger shies away from the logical outcome of Luckmann's definition:

Nevertheless, I question the utility of a definition that equates religion with the human tout court. It is one thing to point up to the anthropological foundations of religion in the human capacity for self-transcendence, quite another to equate the two. (16)

However, despite his reservations, Berger has come no closer to defining "the sacred" in such a way that it can be used easily in sociological research. Indeed his treatment of the sacred goes no further towards adequate operationalization than that presented in 1917 by Rudolf Otto¹⁷. Berger has offered a broad and suggestive perspective on religion, but until these concepts receive more adequate specification it is difficult to see how they can become working hypotheses in day-to-day research. It may be of course that Berger wants to rid sociology not only of Church-oriented research but also of empirical sociology itself. Yet this is hardly a position one would expect Berger to take. For one thing, he asserts that definitions must be judged by their utility rather than their truth content¹⁸. At present the dimensions of the sacred are vague and it is for this reason that some sociologists and anthropologists have opted for a definition of religion which follows Tylor's

minimum definition of religion as "a belief in Spiritual Beings" more closely than Durkheim's "the sacred"¹⁹. If the Church-oriented sociologists are faced by the onus of justifying their activities, the onus on Berger and Luckmann must be to provide adequate indicators for the dimensions of religion. Until this necessary step is taken, sociology of religion will be launched upon yet another chequered career, namely it will be rich in theory and poor in data. This point leads naturally to a discussion of the so-called Church-oriented sociology.

While in general terms Berger and Luckmann's critique of sociology of religion geared to the needs of the Church is supportable, the critique lends itself to exaggeration. For example, they claim that their perspective

leads to a detachment of the sociologist (quasisociologist, that is) from the ideological interests of all, not only of the traditional religious legitimating systems. This includes an emancipation from the "management" point of view within the churches, and also from any scientific ideology that may exist within the field of sociology itself. (20)

By and large, these strictures would be better directed towards religious-sociology than sociology of religion as a whole. No one would want to call Liston Pope, Rodney Stark or Bryan Wilson "lackeys of the Church" despite their Church-oriented sociology.

Most sociology of religion is neutral as regards pragmatic relevance to church problems²¹.

Another misleading implicit assumption behind the Berger and Luckmann critique is that the Church is a well-worn object of sociological enquiry and that little more of value can be learnt by slavish investigation of its organization and functions. Of course in British sociology, the reverse is the case. Very little research has been conducted on the major religious organizations. If the criticism has any relevance, it is in terms of a one-sided interest in sectarian religion to the detriment of sociological understanding of denominational and church religion²². It is not an exaggeration to say that at present our knowledge of the laity of British denominations is slight and that research interest in the past has been concentrated on church functionaries²³.

These two objections - that "the sacred" has not been ascribed adequate empirical dimensions and that little is known about many important aspects of institutionalized religion - do not gainsay the thrust of Berger's argument. Next to Weber's Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, many modern texts in sociology are indeed weak offspring. Furthermore, one would not want to deny the value of either comparative studies or the study of religious "objectification" as advocated by Berger and Luckmann. However, there is no necessary reason for abandoning the sociological analysis of Christian churches

since such analysis is not incompatible with a broad perspective in sociology of religion as a whole. While the Church-oriented sociologist may find himself in an "uncomfortable position nowadays", as Dhooge put it, he need not view himself as l'enfant terrible of the sociology of religion.

Methodism was chosen as a research topic in the light of contemporary lacunae in our knowledge of churches in Britain. There are few studies of modern Methodism, yet Methodism is numerically a major denomination²⁴. Furthermore, research into Methodism runs into few problems of boundaries and consequently the researcher is not faced with the daunting prospect of defining such terms as "sacred cosmos" or "mysterium tremendum". These pragmatic considerations need not commit the Church-oriented sociologist to the inadequacies of a "market-research" approach to religion. Firstly, this research was not financed by the Methodist Church and I have not been inhibited by organizational pressures from, to quote Berger, asking "questions that go beyond the immediate pragmatic concerns of the employer". Secondly, the thesis is not a study of Methodism per se, but a comparative analysis of religious commitment and religious organization.

Chapter 1.References

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- (2) Glock, *ibid.*, noted "the recent spate of textbooks and readers on the subject. See, for example, Milton J. Yinger Religion, Society and the Individual, Macmillan, 1957; Elizabeth K. Nottingham Religion and Society, Doubleday, 1954; and Thomas Ford Hout The Sociology of Religion, Dryden Press, 1958."
- (3) K. Davis and W.E. Moore "Some Principles of Stratification", American Sociological Review, April 1945, 10, 242-49
- (4) R.K. Merton Social Theory and Social Structure, Glencoe: the Free Press, 1963, p.28.
- (5) 1957 was a key year in this critique of functionalism. Glock, *op.cit.*, read his paper on the sociology of religion at the American Sociological Society, A. Eister published "Religious Institutions in Complex Societies: Difficulties in the Theoretic Specification of Function", American Sociological Review, 1957, 22; 4.
- (6) P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge", Sociology and Social Research, 1963, 47, p.419.
- (7) For a discussion of some of these problems, cf. W. Cohn "On the Problem of Religion in Non-Western Cultures", International Yearbook for the Sociology of Religion, Vol. V, 1969, pp. 7-18.
- X (8) Cf. P.L. Berger The Social Reality of Religion, London: Faber and Faber, 1967, ch. 2.
- X (9) Cf. P.L. Berger and H. Kellner "Arnold Gehlen and the Theory of Institutions", Social Research, 1965, 32:1.
- X (10) Berger, 1967, *op.cit.*, p.26.

- (11) For some of sources of Berger's perspective, cf. E. Durkheim The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, trans. J. Swain, Glencoe: Free Press, 1961, A. Schutz Collected Papers (two volumes), The Hague: Nijhoff, 1962. While Berger is self-consciously not a functionalist sociologist, his treatment of "the sacred" does follow some of the earlier functionalists, cf. K. Davis Human Society, Macmillan, 1950.
- (12) Berger and Luckmann, 1963, op.cit., p.424.
- (13) ibid.
- X (14) J. Dooghe "Socio-religious research as a professional role in the institutional church", Social Compass, 1969, 26:2, p. 227.
- X (15) T. Luckmann The Invisible Religion, London: Macmillan, 1967.
- X (16) Berger, 1967, op.cit., p.178
- X (17) R. Otto The Idea of the Holy, trans. J.W. Harvey, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959. Das Heilige was first published in 1917.
- (18) Berger, 1967, Appendix 1.
- (19) Some of the problems of defining the sacred and renewed interest in a Tylorian approach are to be found in J. Goody "Religion and Ritual: the Definitional Problem", British Journal of Sociology, 1961, 12, R. Horton "A Definition of Religion and its Uses", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 1960, 90, M.E. Spiro "Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation" in M. Banton (ed.) Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, London: Tavistock Publications, 1966.
- (20) Berger and Luckmann, 1963, op.cit., 424.
- (21) In Britain, very little sociological research is financed by the churches. The main exception is L. Paul The Deployment and Payment of the Clergy, London: Church Information Office, 1964. In addition, there are small emergent groups of sociologists who are concerned with church problems in a pragmatic way, for example the Methodist Sociology Group, C.O.R.A.T., Religion and Society Dining Group.

(22) Much of the interest in sectarian religion in Britain is of course much influenced by Bryan Wilson's pioneering work in this area.

(23) Cf. L. Paul, op.cit., A.P.M. Coxon A Sociological Study of the Social Recruitment, Selection and Professionalization of Anglican Ordinands (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Leeds, 1965, D.H.J. Morgan The Social and Educational Backgrounds of English Diocesan Bishops in the Church of England 1860-1960 (M.A. Thesis, University of Hull, 1963) D. Clark Survey of Anglicans and Methodists in Four Towns, London: Epworth Press, 1965.

(24) Some recent studies of Methodism have appeared in D. Martin (ed.) A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain, 1 and 2, London: SCM Press, 1968 and 1969.

Chapter 2. ... Interconnection with the

A Definition of Religion and Religious Commitment¹

It was noted that sociological research into Christian churches has in recent years come under considerable attack for its restrictive view of sociology of religion and its weak theoretical development. While this criticism was seen to be important, it was argued that the criticism of Church-oriented sociology is not ipso facto devastating. It now remains to develop the first line of argument for a treatment of what might be termed church - religion².

For over half a century, the sociological definition of religion has been dominated by Durkheim's assertion that

Religious phenomena are naturally arranged in two fundamental categories: beliefs and rites. The first are states of opinion, and consist in representations; the second are determined modes of action. Between these two classes of facts there is all the difference which separates thought from action. (3)

Religious beliefs presuppose a classification of things into sacred and profane realms. Consequently, religion consists in thinking and doing with reference to the sacred. Participation in religious rites and commitment to beliefs unite men into what Durkheim called "moral communities". Following Durkheim's definition of religion, much important theoretical and empirical research has been undertaken on religious beliefs and practices, but an important third dimension of religious phenomena has been neglected, namely

religious experience of the sacred and its interconnection with the other fundamental categories. While the concept of "collective effervescence" played an important role in certain key passages of The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, the concept was not built into Durkheim's definition of religion.

Impressive contributions were made to the scientific study of religious experience prior to the First World War and shortly afterwards, but these contributions have yet to be fully incorporated into the main tradition of sociology of religion⁴. As a result of this discontinuity in sociological theory, religious experience is, as it were, straddled between the two stools of religious belief and practice. An important exception to the claim that sociologists have neglected the significance of religious experience in religious life is to be found in the sociological writings of C.Y. Glock and R. Stark. An examination of their theory of religious commitment will provide the substantive basis of the first section of this thesis on Methodism.

In an early paper on religious commitment, Glock noted that

With some few exceptions, past research has, curiously avoided this fundamental question. Investigators have tended to focus upon one or another of the diverse manifestations of religiosity and to ignore all others. Thus, in one study attention will be confined to studying religious belief, and, in another, to studying differences in religious practices. (5)

In an attempt to overcome one-sided emphases in the study of religious commitment, Glock advocated a multidimensional treatment of religiosity. While the religions of mankind exhibit a bewildering complexity and variety, Glock claimed that there exists

considerable consensus as to the more general areas in which religiosity ought to be manifested. These general areas may be thought of as the core dimensions of religiosity. Five such dimensions can be distinguished. (6)

The five dimensions were called the ideological, experiential, ritualistic, intellectual and consequential dimensions. In examining the content of these five core dimensions, the discussion will follow the more recent treatment of religious commitment which is to be found in volume one of Patterns of Religious Commitment⁷

Religious commitment is defined in terms of a set of expectations relevant to a "religious person". Thus, the belief dimension

comprises expectations that the religious person will hold a certain theological outlook, that he will acknowledge the truth of the tenets of the religion. Every religion maintains some set of beliefs which adherents are expected to ratify. (8)

Closely related to, but distinguishable from, religious belief is religious knowledge which

refers to the expectation that religious persons will possess some minimum of information about the basic tenets of their faith and its rites, scriptures and traditions. (9)

As in the case of the belief dimension, the knowledge dimension is also treated in some detail. As

Knowledge and belief are related in the sense that to adhere to a belief presupposes some knowledge of that belief. Logically, it is impossible to believe in the divinity of Christ without knowing that such a belief exists. On the other hand, to know about the doctrine of Christ's divinity does not entail any necessary belief in the divinity of Christ.

The third dimension is religious practice. On this dimension of religious commitment, Stark and Glock distinguish two classes:

x Ritual refers to the set of rites, formal religious acts, and sacred practices which all religions expect their adherents to perform. (10)

The second class, devotion, refers to those private, informal and frequently spontaneous acts of worship which have been especially valued in the Puritan devotional tradition, for example.

The fourth dimension refers to religious experience. The experiential dimension

takes into account the fact that all religions have certain expectations, however imprecisely they may be stated, that the properly religious person will at some time or another achieve a direct subjective knowledge of ultimate reality; that he will achieve some sense of contact, however fleeting, with a supernatural agency. (11)

Since in this chapter an attempt will be made to introduce religious experience into Durkheim's dichotomy of religious phenomena, it is worth examining this particular dimension in some detail. As

interpreted by Stark and Glock, religious experiences are to be seen as dyadic interactions between a human actor and the sacred¹². Like everyday human interaction, religious experiences involve more or less intimate encounters with divine reality. Stark's four basic types of religious experience - confirming, responsive, ecstatic and revelational - are consequently ranked in terms of increasing intensity and intimacy. Thus confirming experiences, in which the human actor has a sudden awareness that his particular world-view is valid, are more common and less intimate than revelational experiences, in which the human actor becomes a confidant of the divine actor. Parallel with this intimacy continuum is a continuum of increasing discouragement of religious experience. Because ecstatic and revelational experiences are potentially disruptive for society in general and for religious organizations in particular, they are less encouraged than confirming and responsive experiences.

The fifth and final dimension is the consequential dimension. This dimension is seen to be different from the preceding dimensions in that it refers to the secular effects of commitment to religious beliefs, practices and experiences. The consequential dimension identifies the effects of religious belief, practice, experience and knowledge in persons' day-to-day lives. The notion of "works", in the theological sense, is connoted here. (13)

¹² Stark and Glock, *Religion and Society*, p. 10.

Before discussing certain aspects of the interrelations between the dimensions, it will be argued that the original five dimensions can be usefully and properly reduced to three basic dimensions, namely belief, practice and experience. Firstly, Stark and Glock themselves have discarded the consequential dimension from the core of religious commitment:

it is not entirely clear the extent to which religious consequences are a part of religious commitment or simply follow from it. In any event, we shall not take up the study of religious consequences in this volume.....For our present purposes, we will assume that the initial four dimensions provide a complete frame of reference for assessing religious commitment. (14)

Secondly, religious knowledge is very weakly related to religious commitment. While logically it is necessary to know before one can believe, belief does not follow from knowledge. Furthermore, Stark and Glock found that empirically the intercorrelations between knowledge and other dimensions of religious commitment were extremely low. For example the intercorrelation between orthodoxy and knowledge among Protestants was .306 and among Catholics, .133. From a person's score on religious knowledge, one could not predict with any accuracy his score on any other dimension. Finally, there are methodological grounds for treating tests of religious knowledge with some caution, since these tests may give a questionnaire the appearance of being a sort of religious quiz¹⁵. In this thesis,

religious belief, practice and experience are regarded as three crucial dimensions of religiosity. Knowledge is seen to be a particularly weak aspect of religiosity and the consequences of commitment are logically distinct from commitment itself¹⁶.

Concerning the interrelations of religious belief and practices, Durkheim said that

In principle, the cult is derived from the beliefs, yet it reacts upon them; the myth is frequently modelled after the rite in order to account for it, especially when its sense is no longer apparent. On the other hand, there are beliefs which are clearly manifested only through the rites which express them. (17)

In order to incorporate religious experience into the traditional dichotomy of religious phenomena into beliefs and practices, it will be necessary to elucidate the complementary dialectic between ritual and experience on the one hand and between belief and experience on the other.

From what has already been said in connection with the continuum of increasing discouragement of intense, intimate religious experience, it is evident that religious experiences are culturally patterned ways of behaviour¹⁸. One basic interrelationship between ritual and experience is to be found in the fact that religious ritual functions as an "invitation", as it were, for the human actor to encounter a sacred actor through the medium of ritual dance,

gesture or prayer. In many instances, the ritualized situation is defined as one in which religious experiences are not only permissible but expected. The Vision Quest and peyote rites of the North American Indian were of this type: the vision or trance was introduced through ritual fasting, continence and self-torture. Similarly, the practices of the whirling dervishes of Islam, regardless of their original meaning and usage, facilitated the experience of union with Allah¹⁹.

Collective rites, as Durkheim observed, give rise to collective effervescence by which the crabbing routines of ordinary life and human isolation are overcome. The opposite position that religious experiences give rise to religious ritual is equally plausible. Such a position was taken by J. Wach. Starting with a definition of religion which was based on R. Otto's theory of the Holy, Wach treated beliefs, ritual and religious communities as objectifications of man's experience of the Holy²⁰. Rather than attempt any detailed substantiation of Wach's claim that religious experience precedes ritual practice, it is sociologically more interesting to consider the nature of religious "objectification".

Religious ritual is a humanly produced, cultural artifact which functions to integrate human society. Whether or not the origin of ritual is to be found in religious experience or vice versa, second and subsequent generations in religious movement inherit

ritual practices. Public rites are handed down already constructed and hedged with prescriptions. Ritual is, by definition, a highly traditional form of behaviour. Disregard for ritual observances comes to be defined as immoral, blasphemous or dangerous. It is in this sense that rituals are religious objectifications: they are elements of an external social reality, which exercise a constraint over the individual. They are, in short, examples of what Durkheim termed "social facts"²¹.

If the main thrust of religious ritual is towards social cohesion, the consequences of religious experience are potentially in the opposite direction, namely towards anomie. As we have already noted in the case of revelational and ecstatic religious experiences, it is precisely because intense religious experiences threaten the institutionalized order of religion that they are discouraged. While ritual fosters religious experience, it also channels religious experience into controlled and acceptable forms. Ritual regulation of experience is, however, only partially successful. In periods of acute crisis or rapid social change, religious experiences may overspill its ritualized boundaries. It is for this reason that religious movements which develop on the crest of religious emotion - in the case of Methodism, for example - are typically subject to criticism on the grounds of enthusiasm and antinomianism²². Thus,

religious experience and religious ritual are to be conceived as two universal dimensions of religion which are partly harmonized and partly in tension with each other.

Having mapped out certain elementary relations between ritual and experience, it is possible to take up the nature of the relations between belief and experience. Religious belief and ritual are complementary aspects of religious phenomena in the sense that both are responses to the threat of meaninglessness which centres on such human problems as death, injustice, frustration and deprivation. In particular, religious theodicies represent an attempt to make sense of the world in which we live. Paradoxically, however, religious beliefs can also be productive of acute anxiety. Weber's analysis of the anxiety-producing beliefs of early Calvinism demonstrated this point²³. In so far as God was absolute and beyond human influence, Calvinism created uncertainty over the ultimate salvation of the individual. Religious anxiety was resolved by a progressive reinterpretation of the pristine Calvinist theology such that worldly success came to be defined as a sign of election. Thus, one solution to the anxieties which were generated by the Calvinist theodicy was through a "calling" in the world. An alternative solution to the "hidden" nature of the divine is to be found in religious experience²⁴.

The experiential solution rests on the assumption that, not only is the Holy unapproachable through ritual, but also the Holy defies human thought. However, while the Holy is beyond human cognition, it can be experienced. Examples of this experiential position are common in mystical religions. Experiential union with the divine found expression in that classic of English mysticism, The Cloud of Unknowing:

He may be loved but not thought. By love
may He be gotten and holden; but by
thought never. (25)

Doctrines which affirm the hiddenness of God lend themselves to popular religious movements only after they have been re-interpreted in such a manner that certain "signs" - worldly-success through an ascetic calling or emotional union through mysticism - can be identified as indications of divine favour²⁶

Just as religious beliefs may stimulate certain types of experiential response, so religious experiences react back upon beliefs²⁷. We have already noted that the confirming type of religious experience validates already held beliefs. However, one important function of all religious experiences is to provide evidence for the reality of the non-empirical, hidden domain which lies behind religious belief. In so far as religious experiences involve a communication with the sacred, they confirm not only that

the sacred exists but that it is responsive to the human actor's approaches.

While religious experience has this crucial role to play in supporting the plausibility of belief, there is a tendency for beliefs and experience to become separated over time. This separation is implicit in religious routinization and in the anomic potentiality of religious experience. It is possible to illustrate one aspect of this routinization by referring to the problems which face conversionist sects²⁸. First generation converts to religious movements have direct, personal and frequently dramatic evidence of conversion - a sub-type of responsive experiences - from the "world" into a new "moral community"²⁹. Second and subsequent generations tend to inherit their religious membership and religious beliefs from their parents. Religious fervour is whittled down over time and replaced by traditional and familial forms of religious association. In addition to this routinization, the emergent denomination places less and less emphasis on salvational experiences. Excessive religious enthusiasm becomes both incompatible with the status and social respectability of middle class denominations and threatens the denomination's organizational stability. Thus with denominationalization, church members are less prone to religious emotionalism and less encouraged to have

such experiences. Members of denominations, consequently, find less experiential confirmation of their beliefs than is the case for members of religious sects.

The founders of sociology both stimulate contemporary research by having defined the boundaries and domain of sociology and inhibit research by definitions which were too restrictive. Thus Durkheim's definition of religion as a system of beliefs and practices which unite their adherents into moral communities has meant that there has been a tendency to neglect the analysis of religious experience. By modifying Glock and Stark's theory of religious commitment, it has been argued that religious experience represents a third, crucial dimension of religion. In this way it is possible to achieve a comprehensive definition of both religious commitment and religion. Religious commitment is defined as a set of expectations that the religious actor will interact with the sacred in terms of belief, practice and experience. Religion is defined as an institution of culturally patterned interaction with and culturally defined experience of the sacred, commonly and traditionally understood in terms of superhuman beings. The Belief system of a religious institution consists of beliefs about the existence and nature of the sacred and of the means of approaching or interacting with the sacred.

Analysis of religious experience will not only generate a

comprehensive definition of religion but will indicate important aspects of changes of religious orientation. This is the case because, of the three fundamental dimensions of religiosity, religious experience is potentially the most dynamic. If the latent function of belief and ritual is to conserve, the latent function of experience is frequently to change and to remodel existing beliefs and practices. Alternatively a religious equilibrium is preserved only when ritual, belief and experience are congruent with each other. In part two of this chapter attention is drawn to a theory of changing religious orientations.

From Virtuoso to Mass Religious Styles

Apart from minor shortcomings in theoretical precision and logical tightness, Glock and Stark's typology of religious commitment suffers from a tendency to be static and descriptive³⁰. The main contribution of American Piety has so far been to locate different orthodox or theological camps within American Protestantism. Where changing religious orientations come to the foreground, Glock and Stark provide descriptions of these changes rather than explanations of them³¹. Thus their analysis is in terms of who is orthodox rather than why they are, in terms of what changes in belief have taken place rather than with how these changes occur.

In order to provide subsequent chapters with a dynamic, explanatory framework, it is necessary to build into the typology of religious commitment hypotheses relating to dominant forms of changing religious orientations. The approach to these hypotheses will be via Weber's theory of religious theodicies and virtuoso religious styles. By way of apologetic, it ought to be noted that, while Weber is the basis of this exposition, Weber's theory is approached indirectly. Translators of Weber's sociological writing have frequently alluded to Weber's "almost studied disdain of the ordinary properties of language"³². For this reason, it is frequently difficult to "dig"
 33
 Weber's theory out of the text. For example, while references to

virtuoso religiosity occur throughout Weber's sociology or religion, there is no continuous or concentrated analysis of this religious style. It is on these grounds that the exposition of Weber's theory of theodicy is approached through Peter Berger's The Social Reality of Religion in which one finds a useful integration of Weber's complex - and frequently scattered - sociology of religion³⁴.

Any religious explanation of such phenomena as death, misfortune, disease, war and human chaos constitutes a theodicy. In so far as a theodicy remains plausible, it is of critical importance both for the individual and for the society in which he is placed. For the individual, theodicies make sense of life and especially of the individual biography from birth to death. For society as a whole, theodicies legitimate the arranged order of social life;

Put simply, theodicies provide the poor with a meaning for their poverty, but may also provide the rich with a meaning for their wealth. (35)

Different types of theodicy may be ordered on a continuum of increasing rationality. Irrational theodicies are inconsistent, incoherent and partial attempts at explanation. Rational theodicies attempt a consistent, coherent and comprehensive explanation and interpretation of the universe. As an example of an irrational, not to mention humorous, theodicy, one might quote the following:

The rain falls on the just
 And on the unjust fella;
 But mainly upon the just,
 Because the unjust has the just's umbrella. (36)

At the opposite pole of the continuum stand the theodicies of Hinduism and Buddhism. In Hinduism, for example, man's fate in this world and the next was explainable in terms of the three doctrines of karma, samsara and dharma. The universe is governed by an unchanging law of cause and effect, or karma, such that an individual's present circumstances depend on his conduct, or dharma, in his previous existence and his future rebirth or samsara, is conditioned by his present conduct. A rationalized theodicy of this order is capable not only of explaining individual fortune or misfortune, but acts as a powerful conservative, legitimating force in society:

it legitimates the conditions of all social strata simultaneously and, in its linkage with the conception of dharma (social duty, particularly caste duty), constitutes the most thoroughly conservative religious system devised in history. (37)

Theodicies not only explain and interpret human suffering but are closely connected with soteriological doctrines which point to means by which human suffering can be nullified or overcome. Thus, in Hinduism the endless cycle of re-births may be halted by the achievement of union with atman-brahman; in Buddhism, by the achievement of nibbana; in Protestantism, by salvation in Christ through faith. The important sociological consideration at this point is that in highly rationalized theodicies the achievement of salvation

is possible only for an elite group. This problem is the crux of Weber's distinction between virtuoso and mass religions. The problem of salvation and differing religious orientations requires detailed consideration. In order to pinpoint the discussion it will be useful to refer to the interesting case of Buddhism.

In order to achieve nibbana (which is translated as "the cool"), Buddhists must detach themselves from the distractions of this world and from immersion in the self. Detachment was achieved through the systematic and rigorous contemplation of the Four Holy Truths. This degree of detachment was only possible on the basis of abstention from the requirements of day-to-day routines, especially from labour. For this reason

a monastic life alone will normally provide the conditions favourable to a spiritual life bent on the highest goals....The monks are the Buddhist elite. They are the only Buddhists in the proper sense of the word. The life of the householder is almost incompatible with the higher levels of the spiritual life. (38)

Consequently, highly rationalized theodicies tend to produce a large group of persons who, from the virtuoso point of view, are second class citizens. This observation leads to the problem of probing the satisfaction of soteriological needs among the religious mass.

In the Buddhist case, while the laity were precluded from the ultimate spiritual goal, they could earn merit through such activities

as alms giving and financing sanctuaries. This bridge between the monastic virtuosi and laity is neither the most important nor the most sociologically interesting development. In a broad historical perspective, rational theodicies and systematic soteriological techniques are either modified to meet the needs of day-to-day existence or are substituted by or supplemented with religious styles which are compatible with mundane activities. In Buddhism, the Hinayana school was supplemented by demonology and magical practices of the laity. Furthermore, the exclusion of the laity from the possibility of salvation gave rise to a popular form of Buddhism, namely Mahayana Buddhism. The final development of Buddhism away from the elitist implications of virtuoso religion towards a religion of the masses can be found in Tantric Buddhism which combined indigenous animist religions and magic with the literary tradition of the Old Wisdom school. Having examined one example of the relationship between virtuoso and mass religion, it is desirable to generalize these observations into a comprehensive account of religious change.

Weber starts with the observation that religion is a "quality" which is unequally distributed through human society:

The empirical fact, important for us, that men are differently qualified in a religious way stands at the beginning of the history of religion...The sacred values that have been most cherished, the ecstatic and visionary capacities of shamans, sorcerers, ascetics and/

pneumatics of all sorts, could not be attained by everyone. The possession of such faculties is a "charisma" which to be sure, might be awakened in some but not in all. (39)

The fact that these highly valued faculties have not been equally distributed is the basis of an emergent religious stratification:

It follows from this that all intensive religiosity has a tendency towards a sort of status stratification, in accordance with differences in the charismatic qualifications. (40)

Religious stratification takes the form of two caste-like groups:

"Heroic" or "virtuoso" religiosity is opposed to mass religiosity. By "mass" we understand those who are religiously "unmusical"; we do not, of course, mean those who occupy an inferior position in the secular status order. (41)

Finally, these caste-like groups are separated by "a deep abyss":

Wherever the sacred values and the redemptory means of a virtuoso religion bore a contemplative or orgiastic-ecstatic character, there has been no bridge between religion and the practical action of the workaday world.....With such religions, a deep abyss separates the way of life of the layman from that of the community of virtuosos. (42)

While the relations between virtuoso and mass religious groups may be described as caste-like, the important point to consider is the interaction which may take place between the two groups. It has already been noted that Buddhist monks and laymen depended on

each other for services. The monks offered certain spiritual, mythological and magical services⁴³. On their part, the laity provided alms without which the monastic search for detachment would have been impossible. From the point of view of this thesis on Methodism, the most important activity is the attempt on the part of the virtuoso community to extend its beliefs, experiences and practices outside the virtuoso community to society at large. Any missionary drive of this nature invariably leads to modifications of pristine doctrines and practices. Any attempt to develop virtuoso religion among persons engaged in "workaday world" activities must result in a gradual shift in virtuoso patterns of religiosity towards mass patterns. Thus, the original standards of charismatic religion become increasingly congruent with such requirements as food, shelter and sustenance. This transformation Weber calls the "routinization of charisma" and the process by which religion becomes congruent with economic and social needs of its adherents Weber calls a process of "elective affinity".⁴⁴

Having outlined two theoretical perspectives, one relating to religious commitment and the other to virtuoso religion, it remains to unite these perspectives into a complementary approach to religiosity. The simplest approach to this unification is to consider Weber's discussion of "the different roads to salvation"⁴⁵.

? y The systematic and intensive pursuit of salvation may be affected in terms of various combinations of religious commitment; that is, salvation may be seen as developing along the dimension of commitment. Thus,

One path to salvation leads through purely ritual activities and ceremonies of cults, both within religious worship and in everyday behaviour. (46)

Systematic ritualism leads to the sociological consequences already noted, namely that it restricts or precludes everyday economic activity. The ritualism of the virtuoso cuts him off from the layman who, as Weber notes, plays a religious role only at the sidelines:

Ritualistic salvation, especially when it limits the layman to a spectator role, confines his participation to simple or essentially passive manipulations, or sublimates the ritual mood into the most emotional sort of piety, stresses the mood content of the particular devotional factor that appears to bring the salvation. (47)

The ritual path is frequently associated with the achievement of emotional and ecstatic states which in turn become roads to salvation.

Ecstasy, as a means of salvation

may have the essential character of an acute mental aberration or possession, or else the character of a chronically heightened idiosyncratic religious mood, tending either toward greater intensity of life or toward alienation from life. (48)

Apart from paths to salvation in terms of heightened commitment to ritual and experience, Weber considers such cases as the development of an ethic of good works, which occurred in such cases as Zoroastrianism and ascetic Puritanism. Other paths will include the creation of a doctrine of salvation by faith alone, as in Lutheranism, or of a doctrine of special knowledge and illumination as in Gnosticism. Whichever particular development takes place, virtuoso commitment is characterized by systematic attention to and pursuit of some spiritual goal which rules out attachments to the mundane needs of mere survival⁴⁹. For this reason, it may be claimed that the important criterion which separates the two styles of religious commitment, virtuoso and mass, is not so much intensity but cost. Whereas for the virtuoso religion implies a sacrifice, a cost in terms of possessions, sexual relations or secular status, for the mass religion confers the benefits of success in possessions, sexuality or society. Mass religion is, consequently, frequently associated with magical practices and this-worldly considerations.

Chapter 2

References

- (1) This chapter is based on an article Belief, Ritual and Experience: the case of Methodism which is to be published in Social Compass in 1970.
- (2) The second line of argument will be developed in chapter 7 which deals with the nature of religious organizations.
- (3) E. Durkheim The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, trans. J.W. Swain, New York: Collier, 1961, p.51. It was noted in Chapter 1, footnote 19, that "the sacred" has proved a difficult concept to operationalize in day-to-day research and that there has been a renewed interest in recent years in a Tylorian definition of religion as man's interaction with culturally postulated "superhuman beings". The position taken in this chapter is that there is no necessary conflict between these two views of religion. The sacred refers to objects, values, forces, places and superhuman beings which are outside the everyday world and are set aside by an attitude of respect and awe.
- (4) The outstanding figures in the early development of studies of religious experience were J.H. Leuba The Psychology of Religious Mysticism, 1925, W. James The Varieties of Religious Experience, 1902, E. Starbuck The Psychology of Religion, 1899, R. Otto Das Heilige, 1917, and R. Marett The Threshold of Religion, 1914.
- (5) C.Y. Glock "On the Study of Religious Commitment", Review of Recent Research Bearing on Religious and Character Formation in Religious Education, New York, 1962
- (6) *ibid.*
- (7) R. Stark and C.Y. Glock Patterns of Religious Commitment: volume I American Piety: the nature of religious commitment, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968.
- (8) *ibid.*, p.14.

- (9) *ibid.*, p.16.
- (10) *ibid.*, p.15.
- (11) *ibid.*, p.15.
- (12) R. Stark "A Taxonomy of Religious Experience", Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, vol.V, No.1, Fall, 1965. Yet again, one finds in this context certain parallels between sociologists working within Tylorian and Durkheimian traditions cf. R. Horton "A Definition of Religion and Its Uses" Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, vol. 90, 1960 in which Horton claims "the value of Tylor's approach is that it leads us to compare interaction with religious objects and interaction with human beings" p.206.
- (13) Stark and Glock, *op.cit.*, p.16.
- (14) *ibid.*
- (15) In passing it may be noted that while Stark and Glock acknowledge that respondents may have given "biased" responses over sensitive issues of belief (*ibid.*, p.31 f.), they do not raise the problem that respondents may crib answers on religious knowledge. This may be because the authors were amazed by the low scores on "even trivial facts about their faith", p.162.
- (16) The consequences of religiosity are clearly important. Indeed arguments have been put forward recently to suggest that the functions and consequences of religiosity are the primary concerns of sociology. N. Demerath and P. Hammond (Religion In Social Context, New York: Random House, 1969, p.131 f.) argued that "Definitions of religion in the social science literature have also tended to state either what religion is or what it does....But perhaps most social science definitions of religion deal with function or consequence rather than essence". Likewise P. Berger (The Social Reality of Religion London: Faber and Faber, 1969, p.175 f.) argued that "functional definitions....permit a more unambiguously sociological, thus "neater" or "cleaner" line of analysis". Berger however concluded that he would "treat the questions of its (religion's) anthropological rootage and its social functionality as separate matters". A similar position is taken in this thesis. Data were collected on Methodist attitudes towards racialism, economic organization and politics but it is hoped that these findings will be presented elsewhere.

- (17) Durkheim, *op.cit.*, p.121.
- (18) In the following discussion, I am following M. Spiro's definition of religion as "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings" in M. Banton (ed.) Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion London: Tavistick, 1966, p.96.
- (19) An exposition of Sufic devotion is to be found in M. Ling's "Sufism" in A.J. Arberry (ed.) Religion in the Middle East, volume 2, London: Cambridge Press, 1969.
- (20) J. Wach Sociology of Religion, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962, ch.2.
- (21) In this passage, I have ignored the dysfunctions of religious belief and ritual since it is, to some extent, irrelevant to the main argument. For a discussion of religious dysfunctions, cf. C. Geertz "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example", *American Anthropologist*, V.59, February, 1957, pp.32-53.
- (22) The etymological root of "anomie" and "antinomianism" is, of course, the same.
- (23) M. Weber The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. T. Parsons, London: Allen and Unwin, 1930.
- (24) For a particularly stimulating discussion of the hiddenness of God, cf. L. Goldman The Hidden God, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964.
- (25) Quoted from F.C. Hoppold Mysticism: a study and an anthology, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967, p.277.
- (26) It will be argued that in the case of Methodism these solutions were mixed and inseparable.
- (27) In this chapter I have not raised the essentially philosophical question of whether it is possible to have a religious experience prior to the existence of religious beliefs. For a brief discussion cf. I. Seger Durkheim and his Critics of the Sociology of Religion, Columbia University, Monograph Series, 1957.

- (28) This discussion of conversionist sects follows Bryan Wilson's argument in "An Analysis of Sect Development", American Sociological Review, 24, February, 1959, pp.3-15.
- (29) In making this claim I am following Berger's definition of a Sect "as a religious grouping based on the belief that the spirit is immediately present" (P.L. Berger "The Sociological Study of Sectarianism", Social Research, Winter, 1954, p.474).
- (30) These shortcomings would include a certain wolliness about the referent of religious commitment and the logical inter-relations of the dimensions.
- (31) For an example of their essentially static, descriptive analysis cf. Stark and Glock, 1968, op.cit., ch.10.
- (32) M. Weber The Sociology of Religion, trans. E. Fischoff, London: Methuen 1966, p.xv.
- (33) Another important factor in this problem of interpretation is that Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft was not published in its entirety in English until 1968.
- (34) Berger, 1969, op.cit., ch.3.
- (35) *ibid.*, p.59.
- (36) Quoted by C. Geertz "Religion as a Cultural System" in Banton (Ed.), 1966, op.cit., p.21.
- (37) Berger, op.cit., p.65.
- (38) E. Conze Buddhism: its Essence and Development, London: Faber and Faber, 1963, p.53.
- (39) H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961, p.287
- (40) *ibid.*
- (41) *ibid.*
- (42) *ibid.* p.289

(43) Cf. Conze, 1963, op.cit., p.78 ff.

(44) It is clear that the transition from missionary virtuoso religion to mass religion is a perspective on religious change which parallels the sociological analysis of denominationalization. The same type of issues are involved in the transformation of sectarian standards as in the routinization of charismatic and virtuoso religion. Finally, the distinction between mass and virtuoso religion closely resembles the distinction made by G. Allport (Religion in the Developing Personality, Academy of Religion and Mental Health, New York University Press, 1960, p.33) between extrinsic religiosity -

utilitarian, self-serving, conferring safety, status, comfort and talismanic favours upon the believer

and intrinsic religiosity -

This kind of religion can steer one's existence without enslaving him to his limited concepts and egocentric needs.

(45) M. Weber, 1966, op.cit., ch.10.

(46) *ibid.*, p.151.

(47) *ibid.*, p.152.

(48) *ibid.*, p.157.

(49) There are, obviously, quantitative differences between mass and virtuoso religiosity, in the sense that, for example, virtuosos practise their religion more frequently and systematically than the mass. The qualitative differences are more difficult to specify and to assess. This is especially problematic over commitment to belief. In the mass religious style, belief may simply become cognitive assent to traditional doctrines. For the virtuoso, belief is at once more active and subjective. For this reason, the virtuoso will react against any tendency to water belief down to a set of learnable propositions. While Sufis were engaged in a systematic concentration on the "Oneness of Being", they were perfectly aware of the dangers of idle intellectual speculation. When Sufis came to the conclusion that Islamic belief had been rendered harmless by

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dogmatic codification, their beliefs frequently took an "atheistic" bent. Alu Yazid al-Bistami reacted against such tendencies by declaring "Glory be to Me! How great is My Majesty!" For a disucssion of these developments in Islamic Sufism, cf. Lings in Arberry, 1969, op.cit. Lings interprets such doctrinal developments in Sufism as attempts to clarify the boudaries between virtuoso and mass religion.

Chapter 3.Methodology of the Research

Troeltsch wrote towards the end of his life that

The fact remains that all intransigence breaks down in practice and can only end in disaster. The history of Christianity itself is most instructive in this connection. It is, in the long run, a tremendous, continuous compromise between the utopian demands of the Kingdom of God and the permanent conditions of the actual human life. (1)

While Troeltsch had in mind the progressive accommodation of Christianity to secular culture and society, this sort of pessimism applies with equal, though less dramatic force, to the sociological endeavour itself. Empirical research is necessarily a compromise between theory and practice. Theory stipulates and conceptualizes certain key problems, such as the "decline of religion", and outlines certain data requirements and procedures which would clarify or solve these problems. Theoretical requirements are rarely satisfied because research resources are frequently inadequate or because satisfactory indicators cannot be developed². This research into Methodism is no exception to this general problem. At each stage in the research process, a compromise was forged between what was theoretically desirable and what was practically possible. This account of the methodology of the research may be viewed therefore, as another chapter on how "intransigence breaks down".

One of the necessary requirements for a comprehensive analysis of the decline of Methodism would be a national survey of its laity and ministry. In 1966, when this research was initiated, the Methodist Connexion had seven hundred thousand lay members and four thousand ministers³. Clearly, a national survey is beyond the resources of postgraduate research. It would have been feasible to study the ministry on a connexional basis, but this option was not taken on the grounds that in general the Christian ministry has received far more attention than the laity. Furthermore, ministerial studies provide a somewhat one-sided view of the present position of the Church. It was decided that a large sample of laity and ministers in one Methodist District was both a desirable and realistic choice. The particular reasons for selecting the Leeds District were largely personal, familial and accidental. However, as an undergraduate at the University of Leeds, I had built up a wide range of informal contacts with ministers in the area and it was assumed that these contacts would provide a useful opening for the research.

In the autumn of 1966, these informal acquaintances were extended to include every minister in the District. Superintendents of circuits were requested to forward current copies of the quarterly plan and directory. The data from the plans gave the basis for taking the sample for the survey. The District had twenty-three

circuits, two hundred and eighty-eight societies and over twenty-three thousand members. Geographically, the District includes a cluster of towns around the city of Leeds within a radius of approximately twenty-one miles.

Sampling Procedure

One of the principal aims of the sampling procedure was to avoid treating the respondents in an atomistic fashion⁴. It was necessary, therefore, to select a variable which would locate individuals in some sociologically meaningful context. The first variable which appeared to be relevant to this aim was a rural-urban continuum. Several important problems, however, arose against its selection. Methodist circuits could not be adequately dichotomized into rural or urban circuits since they display considerable internal heterogeneity. To utilize Methodist societies as sampling units would have required extensive information on all societies in the District. Furthermore one would run up against the problem that membership of Methodist societies is not necessarily drawn from the same geographical location as the society. For example, many small rural chapels in the Harrogate area had members of the congregation who were urban commuters. In addition to these practical difficulties, there are theoretical problems associated with defining the rural-urban continuum.

Given the complications of categorizing societies in terms of urbanization, it was decided to stratify the sample by the size of Methodist societies. Since a complete list of societies and their size of membership had been extracted from the circuit plans, there were no practical difficulties associated with this criterion of stratification. It was assumed that size of society would have theoretically important implications. Size and complexity of organization have, for example, been important criteria of the church-sect typology. It was expected that small Methodist societies would be more intimate, more integrated than large, formal Methodist societies. Thus, small chapels would resemble sects; large chapels would resemble church-type organizations⁵.

In the early stages of the research, the assumption that size of society was an important variable was re-inforced by the discovery that the average size of Methodist societies was remarkably low. The cumulative frequency of size of societies was trichotomized⁶. The first tertiary, small chapels, had a membership of less than thirty-four persons; the second tertiary, medium size chapels, between thirty-five and eighty-five; the third tertiary, large churches, had a membership up to four hundred and seventy-seven persons (tables 3:1 and 3:2). The average size of Methodist societies in the District was eighty-one.

It is interesting to compare these findings with those reported by Glock and Stark on Californian churches and with Methodist connexional statistics. Glock reported that

more than three-fourths of all mainline Protestants were in churches having more than 300 members. (7)

"Third-force" or sectarian groups in the Californian survey had an adult membership of approximately eighty persons. Methodist societies in the Leeds District were, therefore, the same size in membership as Californian sects, but far smaller than the main Protestant denominations. Furthermore, the average size of Leeds' societies was slightly larger than the connexional average (Table 3:3). In conclusion, while Methodism at connexional level is a large, hierarchical and complex organization, at circuit level congregations are small units.

Having selected this sampling criterion, certain somewhat arbitrary decisions were taken with regard to the eventual size of the sample. A sample of approximately six hundred members of the church was thought to be an adequate sample size and would guarantee stable percentages for questionnaire items⁸. Rather than sample sparsely from a large number of Methodist societies, a twenty per cent sample of societies was taken from each church-size category, giving a sample of fifty-seven societies (Table 3:4)⁹. In order to

achieve an approximately equal number of members from each church-size category, a disproportionate sampling fraction was employed in each category¹⁰.

Once the sampling strategy had been developed, permission was then sought from ministers for their inclusion in the survey. In four cases, permission was not granted. Two societies were in the process of protracted negotiations for amalgamation and ministers thought that a survey might create additional difficulties. One church had no membership list and the final refusal resulted from the decision of the Leaders' Meeting which thought that the survey was "undesirable". Eventually, these four churches were replaced by churches with an appropriate membership size and from the same circuits.

After the churches from circuit plans had been sampled, the ministers in charge of the churches in the survey were visited so that a sample of the laity could be obtained. Membership rolls of Methodist societies contain the list of members who have been received into the church by a service of public recognition. The membership roll is normally organized into Methodist classes, so that a member of the Methodist church is a class-ticket holder. Since members were sampled from class lists, persons under the age of sixteen years were generally excluded from the survey¹¹. While adherents and

baptized young people are interesting sections of the church, it is extremely difficult to take sample because exhaustive lists of adherents are rarely kept by the church. Finally it ought to be noted that the sample is of individual church members. Ideally, households rather than individuals could have been sampled, but, in the case of small churches, one household often forms the entire congregation of the particular society¹².

The outstanding problem of sampling from membership lists is that the lists are invariably and notoriously inaccurate. In particular, membership rolls contain much "dead wood", since ministers either have insufficient time to bring lists continuously up to date or are reluctant to remove names from the list where there is some doubt about membership. In cases where a minister had been in a circuit for some maximum period of around six years, membership was frequently either memorized or committed to loose sheets of paper. Consequently, the physical record of membership varied between a collection of rough notes to elaborate filing systems. Following Glock, an attempt was made to correct membership records from the returned questionnaires¹³. For example, undelivered mail gives some guidance to the inaccuracy of membership lists. By removing errors in membership lists, it is possible to improve the response rate. This procedure will be discussed shortly.

It was evident that ministers would play an important role in guaranteeing the ultimate success of the survey. The research project was completely dependent on their full co-operation. While support for the survey was genuine, many ministers felt that the questionnaire would appear as a threatening document to their church members. Alternatively, the research was seen to be potentially disruptive of minister - lay relations. The procedure which was adopted to curb these potential dangers and disagreements was to make a concession to the ministers by which certain members who had been sampled from membership lists did not receive a questionnaire. Stringent criteria were set up beforehand for the extraction of certain categories of church member. These were: chronic mental or physical ill health and extreme age. Ill health was an easily administered criterion. For example, two members in the initial sample were in the last stages of cancer and were expected to die before the questionnaire was mailed. The criterion of age presented more difficulties. An ad hoc guide of eighty years and over was finally chosen. In cases of old age, the minister was asked whether in his opinion the person was physically capable of completing the questionnaire. In a few instances, a minister volunteered to help an aged respondent. It has to be recognized that this concession was potentially damaging to the representativeness of the sample, but on diplomatic grounds it served to placate doubts and objections from ministers. The losses

from this concession were in any case relatively small¹⁴.

The sample of the ministry was far less complicated. The Synod Handbook and Directory 1967-68 for the Leeds District listed one hundred and ten ministers. Nineteen of these were supernumerary ministers whose duties in the District were very marginal. A further four ministers were in some form of full-time educational work. It would have been possible to take a random sample from the remaining ninety-one full time ministers. Instead the thirty-eight ministers who had an active responsibility for the societies in the sample were selected as the ministerial sample. This procedure was adopted for essentially practical reasons. Since it was necessary to visit these ministers in connection with the lay sample it saved on resources to include them in the survey. It was also assumed that it would be beneficial to have these particular ministers involved in a joint survey with their laity. Minister would be less suspicious of a questionnaire to their laity which they themselves were completing. The inclusion of the ministry, therefore, depends on the prior random selection of their church. The major weakness of this ministerial sample is that on multiple-choice questions percentages are frequently unstable because the sample was too small (Table 3:5). However, this is not a relevant problem, since very little use is made of the ministerial data in this thesis.

Questionnaire and Pilot Study

While Church-oriented sociology may be at present unfashionable, it need not be trivial sociology. In chapter two, it was claimed that comparative studies of religious commitment is one way of avoiding such triviality. This assumption affected the research in a number of important ways. To some extent, comparative research implies that common definitions, common research instruments and data are available to sociologists in different cultures. Fortunately, the research of Glock and Stark goes some way to meet these requirements. Their treatment of the dimensions of commitment, their questionnaire and research data on California and America as a whole offer a ready-made channel for comparative sociology. Consequently the American questionnaire was adopted as a basis for research into British Methodism. Several minor alterations were, however, important.

One important, but simple, objective was to reduce the size of the original American instrument. It was felt that there were too many variables for a single researcher to analyze and that a reduction in the number of variables would improve the response rate. One drastic operation involved the complete exclusion of all items on religious knowledge¹⁵. Further reductions were made by the exclusion of items on anti-Semitism, race relations, communism and social deprivation since these issues were outside the theoretical interests

of the research. In addition, specifically American idioms and expressions were replaced by English phraseology.

Important augmentations to the American questionnaire were items related to organizational problems in Methodism. These additions were concerned primarily with the ecumenical movement.

One major dilemma which faces comparative research of this nature is that even minor changes in research instrument reduce the basis of potential comparisons. In specific terms, any alteration of the questionnaire would have automatically reduced the number of direct comparisons between the Californian and Yorkshire data.

When faced with this dilemma, the option taken was always in favour of retaining original items. This option had in turn serious implications for the nature of the pilot study.

One of the aims of pilot studies is to derive questionnaire items which truly and sensitively reflect the attitudes and behaviour of a research population. Pilot studies safeguard a researcher from unwittingly forcing his attitudes onto his sample. In addition to deriving accurate items, the researcher hopes that the study will elicit issues which may have been initially overlooked. Since the questionnaire was already available in this research, the pilot study on Methodists in the Leeds District had rather limited aims.

These aims were to ascertain whether ambiguities, doubts or incomprehension resulted from the use of an American questionnaire with a British sample; to modify American idioms; to elicit responses on the question of Anglican-Methodist unity.

In order to carry out the pre-study, ministers from all circuits were asked to forward the names of members who were defined by the minister as "heavily committed", "average" and "marginal" members of their societies. From the resulting list of persons, fifteen members were selected at random for pilot interviews. Of this pilot sample, twelve gave permission to be interviewed and three additional members were sampled to replace the abstentions. In addition to this lay group, the thirty-eight ministers who were involved in the survey, were interviewed, along with one deaconess.

The general conclusion from the pilot study was that the American questionnaire in a modified form was perfectly satisfactory for this English sample. This conclusion is particularly true of those items relating to religious belief and practice. However, certain problems emerged in connection with the experiential dimension. Examples of religious experience which were offered by pilot interviewees would not necessarily count as "religious" on criteria laid down by Stark¹⁶. Many found such questions embarrassing or intimidating. It was decided, however, that items on religious ex-

perience from the American questionnaire would have to be included because comparisons on these items were important from a theoretical point of view. The ambiguities of the experiential dimension will be discussed in a later chapter. All interviewees were especially vociferous on the problems of ecumenism and church organization so that no problems arose initially on these aspects of the questionnaire construction.

Having modified the American questionnaire and collected the list of members for the sample, five hundred and sixty questionnaires together with an introductory letter (letter one) and instructions were posted on 1st January, 1968. A follow up letter (letter two) was sent to non-respondents in February and a final letter (letter three) and another copy of the questionnaire were posted on the 1st March. A copy of the questionnaire with follow up letters is to be found in Appendix I of this thesis.

Response Rate

As one might expect, about three-fifths of the questionnaires were returned within the first month, but subsequently the response rate fell off sharply. The return was stimulated by the various follow-up devices, but these had no prolonged effect. An initial period of three months was allowed for the return of questionnaires, after which no further contact was made with non-respondents. In

all, four hundred and seventy-seven questionnaires were returned by the beginning of April, 1968 (Table 3:6).

These questionnaires constituted the gross response, since they included completed questionnaires, blank returns and postal failures. The gross response was eighty-five percent, with the lowest response recorded for small churches (Table 3:7). While the gross response was encouraging, it was important to give greater definition to the return by breaking it down into different categories.

Of the gross return, twenty-four were postal failures which included "no such street", "demolished" and "no such address". A further eleven questionnaires were returned by persons who claimed that they were not Methodists. Two questionnaires were returned by relatives of individuals on the membership rolls who were in fact dead. By utilizing this information, it was possible to correct the membership lists after the return of questionnaires. The original sample was five hundred and sixty members of the District and of these thirty-seven persons should not have been on membership lists. The response rate was, therefore, calculated on the basis of five hundred and twenty-three persons.

The remainder of incomplete questionnaires from bona fide Methodists may be dichotomized into blank returns with or without

explanatory comment. There were fifty-seven blank questionnaires with accompanying commentary. For example, thirty-one members reported that they were too ill, too old or both to answer the questionnaire. A further nineteen refused to answer the questionnaire on principle either because they disagreed with questionnaires as such or objected to this questionnaire in particular. In the latter category, many were annoyed by questions on income and political preference (Table 3:8). Therefore, from a sample of five hundred and twenty-three, three hundred and forty-two completed questionnaires were returned. The response rate on this basis was sixty-six per cent (Table 3:9)

Having analyzed the response rate, it is important to turn to an examination of the non-response category in order to estimate bias. It is the normal practice in survey research to initiate some extensive follow-up of non-respondents in order to assess whether they differ significantly from respondents in terms of characteristics which are seen to be of importance to the research. Although such procedures are highly desirable, they presuppose fairly substantial resources. It was felt that any worthwhile follow-up could not be undertaken by one researcher and, since non-respondents had already received correspondence on three separate occasions, the probability of achieving a response was comparatively low. Rather than using

conventional follow-up techniques, enquiries were made through ministers about the sort of response, if any, they had encountered from their laity, which might suggest reasons for non-response. Reports from ministers seemed to parallel the explanations which were occasionally offered with blank returns. Several ministers had received complaints from old and sick persons who claimed that they were physically incapable of completing the questionnaire. One minister had been informed that some of the laity "had thrown the questionnaire on the fire" because of questions on income and politics. In the case of small churches, difficulties associated with agricultural occupation explained non-response.

Ministers working in rural circuits pointed out that heavy farming commitments frequently meant that respondents had not had time to complete their questionnaire. This was especially true in the Pateley Bridge circuit. In small churches, furthermore, it sometimes occurred that more than one member of the family received a questionnaire. In these cases, the laity felt that one response would adequately cover all members of the family. Alternatively, they felt that some bias had crept into the survey and that the church was suddenly interested in their particular family. In short, it was felt that the sample was not random but purposive. This type of explanation lends some weight to the assumption that non-respondents do not

studies. The non-respondents do not differ significantly from respondents on variables which are central to the survey. For example, there is no evidence that they differ in terms of religious commitment. On the contrary, it would appear that the majority of non-respondents are "uninterviewable"¹⁷.

However, from the original sampling frame the sex and size of church of both respondents and non-respondents were known. On these variables, it was possible to test for statistical difference. The non-response category was made up of eighty-three persons who did not return their questionnaire, forty-one who returned blank questionnaires and nineteen who refused to reply on grounds of principle. It could be expected that since women typically have more free time than men, women would be more likely to return completed questionnaires. In fact, sex played a trivial part in the response rate. Only thirty-four percent of non-respondents were men and there is no statistically significant difference between respondents and non-respondents in terms of sex (Table 3:10). Almost half of the non-respondents came from small churches and, as a result, there is a significant difference in terms of size of church between the two categories. (Table 3:11)

Statistical difference is one thing, evaluation is another. Size of church is only important in chapter ten where an attempt is made to assess the importance of size of church in terms of religious commitment. In all other chapters, a weighted total of the three size

strata is the basis of percentage tables. (Table 3:12) In the case of weighted totals, small churches responses contribute very little to the total summation. Furthermore, the overall response rate of sixty-six percent compares favourably with the Californian response of seventy-two percent for "mainline Protestants" (Table 3:13). Finally, ninety-five percent of the ministers in the Leeds District returned a completed questionnaire. Apart from the low response from small churches, the response rate is adequate for the purposes of this research.

Comparisons between the Leeds data and survey data from California, American and Britain will be made during the course of the thesis.

The nature of these various surveys will be examined at relevant points in the text. However, it needs to be acknowledged at this stage that it is difficult, if not impossible, to assess whether Leeds Methodism is in any way atypical of Methodism in Great Britain. Survey of Methodism which have been carried out by Clark, Pagden and Hill used sampling techniques and questionnaires which differ so radically from the present research, that they provide no help on this issue¹⁸. The A.B.C. TV survey cannot be used to gauge the representativeness of Leeds' Methodism¹⁹. Apart from differences in the nature of the samples, the A.B.C. TV survey broke its respondents down into "Church of England", "Roman Catholics" and "Nonconformists". Unfortunately no attempt was made to differentiate groups

within the Nonconformist category.

In the absence of any comparable national data, the weaker argument is that at least the data from the survey do not conflict with current sociological assumptions. For example, it was found that women outnumber men in the church: sixty percent of the respondents were female (Table 3:14). While the surveys referred to found a better male representation, this is accounted for by the nature of their sampling strategy. For example, the A.B.C. TV survey found that fifty percent of Nonconformists were male, but the sample was of adults rather than church members. In the London survey of Methodists, the questionnaire was sent to the head of the household. On other social characteristics, there is considerable parity of data between these various surveys in spite of different survey techniques.

In addition to over-recruiting from females, churches tend to have greater success among the middle-aged and the middle and upper classes. In the Yorkshire survey, sixty-three percent of respondents were over forty-one years of age (Table 3:15). The London survey found rather similar distributions on age²⁰. While the A.B.C. TV survey found a younger age structure, over half of the Nonconformists were between thirty-five and sixty-four years of age. Similarly, the surveys found that the churches over-recruit from the middle

classes. In the case of the Leeds District survey, sixty-eight percent of respondents were drawn from social classes two and three (Table 3:16). Thus, while no claim can be made that Methodists in the Leeds District are typical of Methodists or Nonconformists nationally, the data available indicate that Leeds Methodists are not a-typical.

Summary

The compromise between theory and practice - the breakdown of "intransigence" - is now fully apparent. At each stage in the research process, a compromise was developed between what was desirable and what was possible. While the research is concerned with the very general changes in Methodist commitment, the data are overwhelmingly from the Leeds District. The research concentrated on sampling church members, thus ignoring such important groups as the adherent and the uncommitted teenager. In order to make comparisons with the religion in America, an American questionnaire was adopted which may be slightly incongruent with British Methodist patterns of religious commitment. This choice in turn led to a curtailed pilot study. The size of the sample was reduced because of faulty membership lists. Because of the absence of similar research on Methodists in other Districts, no attempt can be made to evaluate the representativeness of the sample on a larger scale. The list of stated and unstated

compromises in any research project in an immature discipline is, by definition, infinite.

However, the infinitude of research compromises is a challenge rather than a destructive pessimism for the test of the true sociologist is not the ability to collect data, but to use them.

Chapter 3.References

- (1) Quoted in W. Pauck Harnack and Troeltsch: Two Historical Theologians, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968; p.78.
- (2) Various accounts of sociological compromise between theory and practice are to be found in P. Hammond (ed.) Sociologists at Work, New York: Basic Books, 1964.
- (3) The precise figures for the Connexion on 31st December, 1965 were 690, 347 members and 4,377 ministers, including supernumeraries.
- (4) For alternatives to atomistic sampling strategies cf. J. S. Coleman "Relational Analysis; the Study of Organizations with Survey Methods", Human Organization, 17, 1958-9, pp,28 - 36.
- (5) One basic idea behind this sampling strategy was that sect-like groups can be located in church-type religious organisations. This idea was based upon the empirical observations of Glock and Stark who observed

Thus, one can say that there are sects within these churches - amid the liberal and loosely integrated Protestant bodies are encysted subcultures of fundamentalist believers, united by affective bonds, and for whom religious experiences are relatively common. (Religion and Society in Tension, Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1965, p.167

This stratification of the sample by size of church turned out to be fruitless since no statistically significant differences between different sizes of church in terms of religious commitment were discovered. Cf. Chapter 10 of this thesis.

(6) The tertiaries were

$$25 + \frac{(95 - 71)}{64} 25 = 34.37$$

$$75 + \frac{(190 - 180)}{25} 25 = 85.00$$

(7) C.Y. Glock and R. Stark Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism, New York: Harper and Row, 1966, pp.221.

(8) A sample of six hundred persons would bring the research in line with the sample, size employed by G. Lenski's The Religious Factor: a sociologist's inquiry, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1961.

(9) All samples in the survey were taken by using random digits from A Million Random Digits, Rand Corporation, Free Press of Glencoe, 1955.

(10) These sampling fractions were 54%, 18% and 5% for small, medium and large churches respectively.

(11) It has been suggested that

in recent years it is probable that the customary age of Reception into Membership has been in the neighbourhood of sixteen to seventeen. (Ministry, Baptism and Membership in the Methodist Church, London: Methodist Publishing House, 1963.

(12) Sampling households would have minimized the sampling differences between the Leeds' survey and Glock and Stark's Californian survey, thereby strengthening the possibilities of direct comparisons between the two surveys.

(13) Glock and Stark, 1966, op.cit., Appendix A.

(14) The number of persons extracted from the original sample for reasons of age or ill health were as follows:

Large churches	11
Medium churches	12
Small churches	<u>3</u>
Total	26
	—

- (15) The theoretical reasons for excluding the knowledge dimension have already been discussed in chapter two.
- (16) R. Stark "A Taxonomy of Religious Experience", Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Vol. V, No. 1, Fall, 1965. Problems associated with the experiential dimension are examined fully in chapter six.
- (17) For a discussion of different types of non-response, especially "uninterviewable" non-respondents, cf. C.A. Moser Survey Methods in Social Investigation, London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1967, p.129 ff.
- (18) D. Clark Survey of Anglicans and Methodists in Four Towns, London: Epworth Press, 1965; F. Pagden "An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Methodist Churches of varying Types and Sizes in the Liverpool District" in D. Martin (ed.) A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain 1, London:SCM, 1968, M. Hill and P. Wakeford "Disembodied Ecumenicalism: a Survey of the Members of Four Methodist Churches in or near London" in D. Martin (ed.) ibid., Vol.2, 1969.
- (19) Television and Religion, (a report prepared by Social Surveys (Gallup Poll) Ltd., on behalf of ABC Television, London: University of London Press, 1964.
- (20) Hill and Wakeford, op.cit., p.21.

Table 3:1

Cumulative Frequency of Size of Congregation
of Methodist Societies in the Leeds District

Limits	f	CF
0 - 25	71	71
25 - 50	64	135
50 - 75	48	185
75 - 100	25	208
100 - 125	14	222
125 - 150	20	242
150 - 175	11	253
175 - 200	8	261
200 - 225	6	267
225 - 250	4	271
250 - 275	1	272
275 - 300	7	279
300 - 325	2	281
325 - 350	1	282
350 - 375	1	283
375 - 400	0	283
425 - 450	0	283
450 - 475	1	284
475 - 500	1	285

Table 3:2

Characteristics of Different Sizes of Methodist
Societies in the Leeds District

Characteristics	Methodist Societies			Total
	Large	Medium	Small	
Size	+86	85-35	34-	
Number of Societies	95	95	95	285
Membership	16,139	5,328	1,633	23,100

Table 3:3

Number and Average Size of Societies in the
Methodist Connexion and Leeds District, 1963-67

Year	Number of Societies	Average Size of Society	
		Connexion	Leeds
1963	11,391	64	78
1964	11,177	64	78
1965	10,942	64	79
1966	10,678	65	79
1967	10,419	65	81

Source: Minutes of the Methodist Conference.

Table 3:4

First Stage of Sample -
20% Sample of Societies within Size Categories

Size of Society	Number of Societies	Sampling Percentage	Sample
Large	95	20%	19
Medium	95	20%	19
Small	95	20%	19
Total	285	20%	57

Table 3:5Ministerial Sample

Ministers in Leeds District	Number of Ministers	Sample Size	Sample %
Ministers	91	38	41.7
Supernumerary Ministers	19		
Ministers in educational institutions	4		
Total	114	38	41.7

Source: Synod Handbook and Directory 1966-67

Table 3:6

Gross Return of Questionnaires,
January-April 1968

Date	Follow-up Device	Size of Society			Total
		Large	Medium	Small	
Jan. - Feb	Letter 1 and Questionnaire	108	105	75	288
Feb. - March	Letter 2	27	49	56	132
March - April	Letter 3 and Questionnaire	12	11	16	39
April +	None	6	1	11	18
Total		153	166	158	477

Table 3:7

Gross Response Rate by Size of Society

Size of Society	Sample Size	Gross Return	Gross Response Rate
Large	179	153	85.4%
Medium	185	166	89.7%
Small	196	158	80.6%
Total	560	477	85.2%

Table 3:8

Reasons for Blank Returns

Size of Society	Too Old	Too Ill	Old and Ill	On Principle	Other	Total
Large	2	2	2	7	0	13
Medium	7	4	2	4	2	19
Small	5	5	2	8	5	25
Total	14	11	6	19	7	57

Table 3:9

Response Rate, Completed Questionnaires
On Corrected Membership Rolls by Size of Church

Size of Church	Sample (1)	Correc-tions(2)	Sample (3)	Return	Resp-onse
Large	179	10	169	123	72.8%
Medium	185	11	174	123	70.8%
Small	196	16	180	96	53.3%
Total	560	37	523	342	65.5%

- (1) Members of the Methodist churches in the District who received a questionnaire.
- (2) Corrections include deaths, not members and postal failures.
- (3) Corrected sample resulting from subtraction of corrections from initial sample (1)

Table 3:10Respondents and Non-Respondents by Sex

Sex	Non-Respondents	Respondents
Male	34.2% (49)	38.0% (131)
Female	65.8% (94)	62.0% (211)
Total	100.0% (143)	100.0% (342)

P > .05

Table 3:11

Non-Respondents and Respondents
By Size of Society

Size of Society	Non-Respondents	Respondents
Large	28.0% (40)	35.9% (123)
Medium	25.2% (36)	35.9% (123)
Small	46.8% (67)	28.2% (96)
Total	100.0% (143)	100.0% (342)

P < .001

Table 3:12Sampling Weights for Size of Church

Size of Church	Membership n	Weights n/N	n/N Rounded to two places
Small	1,633	0.07069	0.07
Medium	5,328	0.23064	0.23
Large	16,139	0.68567	0.70
N	23,100	0.98700	1.00

Table 3:13

Response Rates in Californian and Yorkshire Surveys
 (percentages to nearest whole number)

	Californian Protestants		Yorkshire Methodists		
	Main- line	Third- force	Church Size		
			Large	Medium	Small
Response rate	72	71	73	71	53
Average N	72 (2,326)		66 (342)		

Table 3:14Sex Distribution by Size of Church (Percentage)

Sex	Church Size			Weighted Total
	Large	Medium	Small	
Female	58.5	61.0	66.7	59.6
Male	41.5	39.0	33.3	40.4

Table 3:15Age Distribution by Size of Church (Percentage)

Age Group	Size of Church			Weighted Totals
	Large	Medium	Small	
- 20 yrs.	7.3	3.3	1.0	5.9
21 - 40 yrs.	29.3	22.8	18.8	27.2
41 - 60 yrs.	23.6	39.0	38.5	28.1
61 - 80 yrs.	36.6	31.7	34.4	35.3
81 - 100 yrs.	2.4	x	4.2	2.2
No answer	x	2.4	3.1	1.3

x Less than 1%

Table 3:16Social Class by Size of Church (Percentage)¹

Social Class	Size of Church			Weighted Total
	Large	Medium	Small	
1	9.8	3.3	1.0	7.7
2	29.2	30.1	19.8	28.8
3.	39.8	38.2	40.7	39.5
4	9.8	13.8	19.8	11.4
5	x	1.6	5.2	1.3
No Answer	10.6	13.0	13.5	11.3

x Less than 1%

1. Registrar General's classification.

Chapter 4.Religious Belief

Three fundamental dimensions of religious commitment have been examined in chapter two, in which it was argued that these dimensions are highly interrelated. Furthermore, the dimensions are treated as theoretically equal in significance. This approach to the dimensions of religiosity is somewhat different from the analysis presented by Stark and Glock. In American Piety, belief is defined as theoretically the central core of commitment¹. Stark and Glock assert

For all religions it can be said that theology, or religious belief, is at the heart of faith. It is only within some set of beliefs about the ultimate nature of reality, of the nature and intentions of the supernatural, that other aspects of religion become coherent. Ritual and devotional activities such as communion or prayer are incomprehensible unless they occur within a framework of belief which postulates that there is some being or force to worship.(2)

The implication of chapter two was that it is only in terms of the interrelatedness of the three core dimensions that religious commitment can be fully understood. Furthermore, it is an empirical question as to whether particular religions or religious organizations give special emphasis to belief or to some other dimension. For example, gnosticism gives emphasis to belief and knowledge, whereas mystical

religions experiential union with ultimate reality⁴. In this and subsequent chapters the empirical question is concerned with what emphases were given to the dimensions of religion in Methodism.

The founders and leaders of popular religious movements typically appeal to experiential rather than intellectual needs and orientations to arouse religious interest. This is especially true of religions of the disinherited; attempts to make religion "reasonable" are normally directed at intellectual groups in society⁵. Weber regarded speculative and religious attitudes as incompatible and argued that

No matter how much the appearance of a widespread religious interest may be stimulated, no new religion has ever resulted from the needs of intellectuals and their chatter. (6)

Methodism is a clear example of a religious movement which appealed to the evidence of experience as prior to intellectual understanding of religious dogma. John Wesley reacted against the cold deism and pelagianism of eighteenth century intellectuals. If the concept of "secular" can be said to characterize much of the intellectual debate of the 1960's, then the corresponding eighteenth century debate, especially in the 1720's and 30's, was over "Nature". The comparison is apt, not least with regard to the variety of meaning which has been attached to both ideas⁷. Among the intelli-

gentsia, "Nature" indicated a common intellectual fashion, namely that the inspection of natural laws could establish axioms for morals, society and religion which were as certain as the axioms of mathematics and physics. Such an inspection would produce self-evident criteria for establishing harmony in society. The impact of this fashion on theology was radical. The wrathful God of Israel was replaced by the benevolent mechanic of Nature's Great Machine. Since God could be understood in Nature by the application of human reason, revelation and miracle become irrelevant, even obnoxious. For evangelical Christians, the logic of the debate over "Nature" was seen to warp the life of vital religion. Consequently

Evangelicals sought to replace self-righteousness by a vital religion resting on faith in the atoning work of Christ, faith defined not in cognitive terms (as by Locke) as assent to certain fundamental dogmas, but as something intuitive, based on personal relationship between Redeemer and Redeemed. (8)

Rational deism removed tragedy and experience from religion, replacing them with reflection. Much of Wesley's theology can be seen as an attempt to turn the tables of eighteenth century deism.

Wesley claimed that, except for a small coterie of educated men, introspection did not foster religious certainty:

The traditional evidences of Christianity stand, as it were, a great way off; and, therefore, although it speaks loud and clear, yet it makes a less lively impression.....Whereas the inward

evidence is intimately present to all persons, at all times and in all places...What reasonable assurance can you have of things whereof you have no personal experience? (9)

It was inward conviction and religious trust in God rather than intellectual certainty which gave both Moravians and Methodists an overriding sense of confidence and assurance. Religion, In Wesleyan terms, is not a matter of assent to certain creeds:

But what is faith? Not an opinion, no more than it is a form of words; not any number of opinions put together, be they ever so true. A string of opinions is no more Christian faith than a string of beads is Christian holiness. (10)

The Methodist emphasis on personal experience has important implications for a sociological understanding of Methodism and its decline. Firstly, in the case of Methodism the assertion that "theology is the core of commitment"¹¹ is sociologically naive unless it is considerably qualified. This is especially true when one remembers Wesley's rejection of credal orthodoxy:

Orthodoxy, or right opinions, is at best but a very slender part of religion, if it be allowed to be any part of it at all. (12)

The emphasis in early Methodism was on holiness, not belief:

I have again and again, with all the plainness I could, declared what our constant doctrines are, whereby we are distinguished only from heathens or nominal Christians, not from any that worship God in spirit and in truth. Our main doctrines, which include all the rest are three - that of rependance, of Faith, and of Holiness. The first, of these we account,

as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door; the third, religion itself. (13)

Wesley once commented that even the Devil believes in the Divinity of Christ. The second implication is that, since experience, belief and practice were embedded into each other in early Methodism, all three dimensions must be analyzed in terms of their bearing on each other.

The assertion that Wesley grounded Methodism on the inward experience of the love of God needs numerous qualifications. In theory, the experiences of the heart were not, ipso facto, guarantees of election but were verified or falsified by appeals to the authority of Scripture. The religious experiences of the Oxford undergraduates who formed the Holy Club and of later Methodists must be set against a background of disciplined ritual and private devotion. Wesley gave full weight to the importance of law, reason and conscience in mitigating the sinfulness of man. Just as belief required the counter-force of experience, so experience was checked by restraint.¹⁴

Having considered some of the implications of Wesley's exposition of the importance of inward experience of religion for sociological understanding, it is necessary to consider the implications of personal experience of religious belief on Methodism.

The absence of rigid dogmatism in Methodism was closely associated with the problems of maintaining a religious society within the Anglican Church. The main aim of the Methodist societies was to promote holy living and, in order that this work might not be disrupted by excessive involvement in what Wesley considered theological side-issues, no credal conditions were placed on membership in the societies. In 1788 Wesley wrote

There is no other religious society under heaven, which requires nothing of men in order to their admission into it, but a desire to save souls....The Methodists alone do not insist on your holding this or that opinion, but they think and let think. Neither do they impose any particular mode of worship, but you may continue to worship in your former manner, be it what it may. Now I do not know any other religious society, either ancient or modern, wherein such liberty of conscience is now allowed or has been allowed since the age of the Apostles. (15)

"Liberty of conscience" was an important preservative of organizational cohesion in so far as it concentrated commitment on the one issue of holiness rather than on a plethora of ritual and organizational issues.

In the long run, organizational cohesion broke down over both orthodoxy and right opinion. In 1740, the alliance between Moravians and Methodists had been dissolved because of Moravian indifference to the ordinances of religion and in 1775 the Calvinist

controversy between Wesley and Whitefield had led to an irreparable breach. Calvinist and Arminian Methodist parted company. After Wesley's death, controversies over right opinions in organizational matters resulted in frequent schisms up to the 1850's¹⁶. Far more important, Arminianism and proselytizing zeal contributed to rapid growth in Methodist Membership, but, because strict doctrinal standards of admission were not operated, Methodism had very little control over the type of person recruited. While the class system maintained discipline "deviance" was always controllable, but with the decline of society and class discipline Methodism had little power to preserve standards of holiness. Therefore, the principle of liberty of conscience was an important factor in later denominationalization, on the one hand, and in the shift towards mass styles of religiosity¹⁷.

Although generalizations are dangerous, one might say with some confidence that all cultural innovations are short-lived¹⁸. What for one generation is a break-through, for subsequent generations is a common-place. The growth of traditionalism and formalism in Methodist doctrine is a clear example of this consequence of cultural transmission¹⁹. Wesley's revival of Primitive Church practice and belief, the emotional directness of Methodist preaching and the use of field-preaching were novelties in a society frequently characterized

culturally by intellectualized deism and Socinianism and socially by absentee clergy²⁰. However, the religious revival which had been forged in the eighteenth century was simply received as an inheritance by later generations. Discovery became tradition. Furthermore, it was a tradition which now required theological defence.

Whereas Wesley could advocate "liberty of conscience" for a religious society within a church, Methodism as a separated denomination required a body of dogma to justify its existence. The emergence of a professional ministry trained in Methodist theological colleges facilitated the development of doctrine. Key events in the emergence of a professional ministry were

the sanctioning of the title "Reverend" (1818),
 the institution of the pastoral Address (1819),
 the establishment of a theological institute
 (1835)
the revival of the practice of ordination
 by laying-on of hands (1936). (21)

The detailed ramifications of the routinization of Methodism are necessarily difficult to grasp and appreciate. The impact of these changes on the daily lives of lay Methodists was never recorded for history. Because the evidence is scanty, the theoretical reconstruction of these changes provides a plausible rather than a compelling account. However, one implication of Wesleyanism was that it provided a new "opening" to God through the medium of

experience. Sociologically, Wesleyanism provided an opening for the poor and uneducated to religion. It can be argued, therefore, that the Wesleyan emphasis on the immediacy of religion had the social consequence of equalizing the status of the rich and the poor. Since education and literacy had become irrelevant criteria of religious worth, early Methodism provided the illiterate with a symbolic inversion of the social order. However, by joining Methodism many converts and more of their offspring gained access to education and literacy²². For later generations, the symbolic inversion was no longer socially relevant. The emphasis on experience had itself become part of Methodist dogma. Whatever the full implications and qualifications of these developments may be, one thing needs stressing: any analysis of survey data on contemporary Methodist beliefs must bear in mind that the pristine Methodist position emphasized the crucial importance of experience and personal perfection rather than orthodox belief. It is at a much later stage that belief superceded experience²³.

Having stated this caution in the strongest terms, it cannot be inferred that Wesleyanism was unorthodox or that belief became utterly irrelevant in the lives of Methodists. There can be no doubt that Wesley and the early Methodist people accepted what Stark and

Glock refer to as "the supernatural realm of historic Christianity", which includes as a minimum belief in a personal God, the Divinity of Jesus, salvation through faith and life after death. Without these beliefs, Wesley's sermons, letters and journal would be meaningless. It has been asserted, for example, that "the grace of God is the real focus of Wesley's theology"²⁴, in which case the existence of a personal God is a fundamental premise of Methodist belief.

In Yorkshire Methodism, while no-one denied the existence of God, many of the old certainties appear to have been shaken. For example, only sixty-three percent of the respondents claimed that "God really exists and I have no doubts about it", while a quarter recognized that "Whilst I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God" (Table 4:1) Belief in a "higher power" was marginal. Rather similar responses were found when beliefs about Jesus were examined; sixty-nine percent claimed that "Jesus is the Divine Son of God and I have no doubts about it" and seventeen percent answered "While I have some doubts, I feel basically that Jesus is Divine" (Table 4:2). Finally, greater uncertainty was found to exist on the question of life after death. Only fifty-nine percent felt that this belief was "completely true" (Table 4:3). On three traditional dogmas of orthodox Christianity, one third of the respondents expressed some degree of uncertainty²⁵.

Individual statements of doctrine must, however, be seen as elements of a belief system which strives for coherence and logical interrelation. The system of such beliefs represent an explanation of man and the cosmos: coherent and systematic systems of belief, therefore, represent theodicies. A theodicy not only provides an account of reality but attempts to provide its adherents with ways of adjusting to problems in the world. Explanation and solution are consequently key aspects of religious theodicies.

The soteriological doctrines of early Methodism were complex, even incoherent. Wesley's main position was that salvation depends on inner conviction of faith in Christ as a gift of God's grace. However, Wesley held different attitudes towards the significance of "workd" and "faith" at different times in his life. On one occasion Wesley wrote to Warburton

Each one will have a place in heaven, not according to his notions but according to his works. (26)

On another. Wesley held the view that "Only corrupt fruit grows on a corrupt tree". Wesley's dilemma was that, on the one hand he wished to reject the Calvinist doctrine of predestination by insisting on universal salvation as the free gift of God, and, on the other hand, Arminianism brought Methodism dangerously close to antinomianism so that Wesley also had to stress the importance of

"works". Another complication is that Wesley held the High Church view that Infant Baptism washes away sin, making the child regenerate²⁷. Despite these complications, Wesley's main doctrine of salvation rested on the notion of faith by grace and works were seen mainly as a check to antinomianism and Moravian "stillness".

Among Yorkshire Methodists, there was little departure from the orthodox tenet that salvation depends on faith. Three quarters of the respondents claimed that belief in Christ as Saviour was "absolutely necessary" for salvation (Table 4:4). However, over half thought that "Doing good for others" and "Loving thy neighbour" were "Absolutely necessary" (Table 4:5). On the other hand, comparatively few respondents thought that ritual had any influence on the individual's salvation: thirty-one percent thought Holy Communion and twenty-six percent thought Holy Baptism were "absolutely necessary" (Table 4:6).

While faith and works are defined as crucial to salvation, the absence of both is not defined as a barrier to salvation. When asked whether "Being completely ignorant of Jesus, as might be the case for people living in other countries" would prevent salvation, only ten percent thought ignorance would preclude salvation. (Table 4:7). Similarly, only nine percent thought "Being of the Hindu religion" and one percent thought "Being of the Jewish religion"

would definitely prevent salvation.

While faith was held to be of ultimate importance for salvation for the individual, faith does not count for individuals or groups outside the believer's universe. Similarly, works are important for the individual believer, but the absence of works will not necessarily involve damnation. One sociological interpretation of this apparent contradiction is that, in a pluralist society depending on inter-group co-operation, it is particularly difficult to adhere to beliefs which are binding on the whole of society. In pluralist societies, all world-views become compartmentalized and no group is capable of absolutizing its claims²⁸.

In addition to the oscillation in Methodism between faith and works, one final problem of the doctrine of salvation must be examined. The real goal of Methodism was perfection not orthodoxy. Perfection was not, however, an other-worldly goal, but a condition of the Christian soul, realisable on earth. It was this doctrine of perfection that brought Wesley under considerable attack.

Once a man is justified, he does not sin. This extreme and unpalatable statement roused more fury in Wesley's contemporaries than any other theological statement he ever made. (29)

It would appear that contemporary Methodists find Wesleyan doctrine of this-worldly salvation equally "extreme and unpalatable". Only

thirty-one percent thought of salvation as "release from sin and protection from evil in this life", whereas forty-five percent thought of "eternal life beyond the grave" (Table 4:8). Perhaps what ought to be stressed, however, is that over three-quarters of the respondents still thought in terms of salvation as a religious "reward".

The results of the survey would suggest that the great majority of Methodists accept the basic tenets of orthodox Christianity. However, acceptance of orthodoxy is not the central emphasis of traditional Methodism. Furthermore, responses on belief items are particularly difficult to interpret. High scores on orthodoxy items may simply mean that the Methodist Church is successful in socializing its members into an acceptance of traditional beliefs. High scores on orthodoxy do not necessarily imply that these beliefs have an immediate and personal significance for church members. A theodicy could be acceptable without being plausible; the beliefs may be dormant in the sense that they no longer provide a meaning for life. Even the Devil believes in Christianity.

Evidence from the survey suggested that this interpretation of dormant orthodoxy is, in fact, accurate. While the great majority accept traditional orthodoxy, only fifty-two percent were certain that they had "found the answers to the meaning and purpose of life" (Table 4:9). A third of the respondents pointed to the fact that their beliefs were an inheritance, a set of traditional formulae,

when they said "I'm quite certain and I more or less grew up knowing these things". Alternatively, forty percent felt that, in some way, the traditional Christian theodicy had ceased to be completely plausible. Of those who were uncertain, seven percent felt that there were "no answers to these questions". Technically, for this group life has ceased to have an available meaning: a theodicy in the modern world is not only implausible but impossible. For those who are uncertain of the meaning of life, "the traditional evidence of Christianity stands, as it were, a great way off". For those who are certain, the majority have simply inherited a Christian theodicy which does not necessarily rest on their own experience of "the good things the Lord hath done".

Berger attempts to account for the decline of the credibility of traditional Christian belief by an analysis of the phenomenon of pluralism. As modern society becomes increasingly differentiated, the number of alternative and counter belief systems becomes multiplied. Beliefs about man and the cosmos are now seen to be competitive. In so far as Christians become a minority group, Christian certainty becomes increasingly difficult to maintain. Complete credibility is possible only where counter-evidence and counter belief systems are at a minimum. In this analysis, religion is treated as a dependent variable. Berger, however, also analyzes religion as an independent

variable. For example, Berger treats liberal Protestantism as itself a secularizing force. Schleiermacher's emphasis on religious experience, Bultmann's "demythologization" of Christianity, Cox's The Secular City are seen to be logical outcomes of a watered-down Christian supernaturalism³⁰. Rather than attempt such a broad analysis of religious plausibility, I will argue that in Methodism belief has become problematic because of the decline of ritual and experience. The hypothesis involved is that certainty of belief is dependent on the "evidence" of experience, which is in turn generated partly by religious ritual.

Chapter 4.References

- (1) R. Stark and C.Y. Glock Patterns of Religious Commitment: Volume 1, American Piety: the nature of religious commitment, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968, chapters 1 and 9.
- (2) *ibid.*, pp.16-17.
- (3) For this reason chapter divisions on belief, ritual and experience are somewhat artificial. Ideally, it would be most suitable to deal with the three dimensions simultaneously. Practically, this would create many problems. In certain instances, however, it is quite impossible to treat the dimensions separately. For example, arguments relating to experience in chapter 6 require reference to fundamental beliefs. Furthermore, while the distinction between virtuoso and mass religious styles runs through these early chapters as a linking theme, it is developed fully only in connection with religious ritual and devotion in chapter 5.
- (4) Stark and Glock themselves found that empirically their claims regarding the centrality of belief were applicable only in the case of Protestant denominations. Among Catholics, the devotionalism index was as good a measure of commitment as the orthodoxy index. Cf. Stark and Glock, *op.cit.*, ch.9.
- (5) For a classic discussion of some aspects of these class differences cf. H.R. Niebuhr The Social Sources of Denominationalism, Hamden: Shoe String Press, 1954.
- (6) M. Weber The Sociology of Religion, London: Methuen, 1966, p. 137. For a discussion of the "active attitude" of religion cf. T. Parsons The Structure of Social Action, New York; Free Press, 1949, p.424 ff. Religion's negative attitude to intellectualism has been stated forcefully by P. Berger in A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural, Garden City, New York; Doubleday, 1969, p.108 -

it must be recognized that religion is not primarily an activity of intellectuals, indeed cannot be understood as a primarily theoretical endeavor. The fundamental religious impulse is not to theorize about transcendence but to worship it. This is so regardless of whether religion animates large numbers of people in a society or is limited to what I have called cognitive minorities.... Any such intellectualism is particularly repugnant to the Judaeo-Christian traditions, in which faith has always been understood in relation to the actual life, work and hope of human communities that include ditch-diggers as well as theoreticians.

- (7) For a discussion of the concept of "Nature" in the eighteenth century, cf. B. Willey The Eighteenth Century Background, Harmondsworth Penguin Books, 1962. An analysis of the variety of meanings of the "secular" is to be found in D. Martin The Religious and the Secular: studies in secularization, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, ch. 4.
- (8) J.D. Walsh "Origins of the Evangelical Revival" in G.V. Bennet and J.D. Walsh Essays in Modern Church History: in memory of Norman Sykes, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1966, p.149.
- (9) J. Telford (ed.) The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. London: Epworth, 1931, vol.2, p.384.
- (10) *ibid.*, p.381.
- (11) Stark and Glock, 1968, *op.cit.*, p.179.
- (12) Quoted in J. Orcibal "The Theological Originality of John Wesley", in R.E. Davies and E.G. Rupp (eds.) A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, London: Epworth, Vol 1, 1965.
- (13) Telford, 1931, *op.cit.*, pp.267-8.

- (14) The restraints which were placed on emotional expression in Methodism will be examined in chapter 6.
- (15) N. Curnock (ed.) The Journal of John Wesley, London; Epworth Press, 1938, for 18th May, 1788.
- (16) Cf. R. Currie Methodism Divided: a Study in the Sociology of Ecumenicalism, London: Faber and Faber, 1968. Contemporary conflicts over principles of church organization will be discussed in chapter 9.
- (17) The argument here follows that of Bryan Wilson in "An Analysis of Sect Development", American Sociological Review, 24th February, 1959, pp.3-15. Wilson argued that an Arminian theology is an important factor in promoting denominationalization.
- (18) The notion that innovation is short lived is an implicit aspect of Weber's theory of charisma, for example, Charisma "may be said to exist only in the process of originating", M. Weber The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, translated and edited by A.M. Henderson and T. Parsons, London: Hodge, 1947, p.334.
- (19) Religion shares with other social institutions the intrinsic problems of socialization for
- Socialization is never completely successful. Some individuals "inhabit" the transmitted universe more definitely than others. Even among the more accredited "inhabitants", there will always be idiosyncratic variations in the way they conceive of the universe.
- X (Cf. P. Berger The Social Construction of Reality: everything that passes for knowledge in society, London: Penguin Press, 1967, p.124).
- (20) Many of Wesley's "innovations" were, in fact, re-introductions of modes of worship and theology which Wesley thought characterized the early Christian Church: W.E.H. Lecky in A History of England in the Eighteenth Century, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1883, (third edition), p.545, vol.2 makes the same point:

That in such a society a movement like that of Methodism should have a great power is not surprising. The secret of its success was merely that it satisfied some of the strongest and most enduring wants of our nature which found gratification in the popular theology, that it revived a large class of religious doctrines which had been long almost wholly neglected. The utter depravity of human nature, the lost condition of every man, who is born in the world, the vicarious atonement of Christ, the necessity to salvation of a new birth, of faith, of the constant and sustaining action of the Divine Spirit upon the believer's soul, are the doctrines which in the eyes of the most modern evangelical constitute at once the most vital and the most influential portions of Christianity, but they are doctrines which during the greater part of the eighteenth century were seldom heard from a Church of England pulpit. The moral essays which were the prevailing fashion, however well suited they might be to cultivate the moral taste, or to supply rational motives to virtue, rarely awoke any strong emotions of hope, fear or love, and were utterly incapable of transforming the character and arresting and reclaiming the thoroughly depraved.

- (21) Quoted in E.R. Taylor Methodism and Politics 1791-1851, Cambridge: University Press, 1935.
- (22) While converts to Methodism may have gained literacy, the content and purpose of this elementary education were probably very narrow. Cf. E.P. Thomson The Making of the English Working Class, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968, Ch.11
- (23) This claim cannot, however, be substantiated until the data on contemporary religious experience have been examined in chapter 6.
- (24) R.E. Davies "The People called Methodists: Our Doctrines" in Davies and Rupp, op.cit., p.159

- (25) Other fundamental doctrines of orthodox Christianity will be examined in chapters 5 and 6.
- (26) Quoted in Orcibal in Davies and Rupp, op.cit., p.109
- (27) The contemporary view of Baptism in Methodism is that it confers a basis for full membership rather than regeneration:

the child's membership is necessarily incomplete, but that by Baptism the child is brought into the household of faith, and should be regarded as remaining therein, in the hope and expectation of the time when he will personally receive Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord.

(Cf. Ministry, Baptism and Membership in the Methodist Church London: Methodist Publishing House, p.20)

- (28) This view of compartmentalization rests, of course, on the sociology of P. Berger and T. Luckmann. A similar point of view has been put forward by A. MacIntyre in Secularization and Moral Change, London: Oxford University Press, 1967:

The dissolution of the moral unity of English society and the rise of new class divisions lead to a situation where within different classes there appeared different aspirations, and different attempts to express and to legitimate these in religious forms. But the compromises and abdications consequent upon class co-operation of English life produced a situation where it was impossible for any group plausibly to absolutize its own claims and invoke some kind of cosmic sanction for them.
(p.30)

- (29) R.E. Davies "The People Called Methodists: Our Doctrines" in Davies and Rupp, op.cit., p.168.

- (30) It is particularly interesting that Berger sees the "psychologization" of Christianity as an important step in the undermining of religion:

Pietism constituted a shock to Protestant orthodoxy because it "melted down" the dogmatic structures of the latter in various forms of emotionalism. It was thus de-objectivating or "subjectivating", as nicely illustrated in Wesley's notion of the "warmed heart". (Berger, 1969, op.cit., p.156).

The argument of the thesis is that the subjectivating influence of Methodism was, in fact, short lived. Furthermore, objectivating religion does not necessarily imply that religion is more able to cope with the problems of cultural pluralism. Indeed, religious dogma itself may stand for an important routinization of religious zeal.

Table 4:1

Belief in God
(Percentage)

I know that God really exists and I have no doubts about it.	62.8
Whilst I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God.	24.9
I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at other times.	4.1
I don't believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power of some kind.	5.3
I don't know whether there is a God, and I don't believe there is any way to find out./ I don't believe in God.	x
Other responses./ No answer	2.5
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

x Less than 1%

Table 4:2Belief in the Divinity of Jesus (Percentage)

Jesus is the Divine Son of God and I have no doubts about it.	68.6
While I have doubts, I feel basically that Jesus is divine.	16.9
I feel that Jesus was a great man and very holy, but I don't feel Him to be the Son of God any more than all of us are the children of God.	6.9
I think Jesus was only a man, although an extraordinary one.	2.0
Frankly, I'm not sure whether there really was such a person as Jesus.	1.3
Other responses / No answer	4.3
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 4:3Belief in Life beyond Death (Percentage)

Completely true	58.5
Probably true	28.3
Probably not true	7.0
Definitely not true	1.0
No answer	5.2
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 4:4Requirements for Salvation - Faith (Percentage)"Belief in Jesus as Saviour"

Absolutely necessary	73.9
Would probably help	15.3
No influence	3.5
No answer	7.3
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 4:6Requirements for Salvation - Ritual (Percentage)

Response	Holy Baptism	Communion
Absolutely necessary	25.9	30.5
Probably help	41.0	49.0
No influence	23.4	11.6
No answer	9.7	8.7
Total	100.0	100.0
N.	(342)	(342)

Table 4:5Requirements for Salvation - Works (Percentage)

Response	Doing good for others	Loving thy Neighbour
Absolutely necessary	58.5	64.9
Probably help	31.4	24.9
No influence	4.8	4.4

Table 4:7

Barriers to Salvation -
Improper Faith and Improper Works (Percentages)

Types of Impropriety	Definitely Prevent	Probably Prevent	No Influence
Ignorance of Jesus, as might be the case for people living in other countries.	10.5	19.9	57.9
Being of the Hindu religion.	8.8	15.3	58.8
Being of the Jewish religion.	1.3	9.7	79.4
Discriminating against other races	28.7	43.3	16.7
Being anti-Semitic	24.4	21.5	34.0

Table 4:8

"When you think of salvation, do you think primarily of being granted eternal life beyond the grave, or do you think of being released from sin and protected from evil in this life?" (Percentage)

Life beyond the grave.	44.8
Release from sin and protection from evil in this life.	30.9
Other	18.3
No answer	6.0
Total	100.0
N	(342)

Table 4:9

Theodicy - "How sure are you that you have found the answers to the meaning and purpose of life?" (Percentage)

I'm quite sure and I more or less grew up knowing these things.	33.1
I'm quite certain, although at one time I was pretty uncertain.	18.6
(Percentage certain)	(51.7)
I'm uncertain whether or not I've found them.	26.8
I'm quite sure I've not found them.	6.3
I don't really believe there are answers to these questions.	6.8
No answer.	8.4
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Chapter 5.Religious Practice: from Virtuoso to Mass Religion

Stereotypes play an important, sometimes regrettable part in ordering the everyday world. In the historical interpretation of the rise and nature of Methodism, the popular stereotype of Methodists as persons who rigidly avoid the pleasures of worldly living has resulted in a rather narrow understanding of the core of Wesleyan teaching. Townsend, for example, argued that, because of the weakness and corruption of the Church of England, organized religion failed to deal with the social and moral disorganization resulting from industrialism. For Townsend, Methodism was a providential movement against the "prevailing vices and immoralities" of the eighteenth century in which the

evangelical message was silent in the pulpits, the pleading and wooing note of the Puritan was no longer heard, the sermons and generally read from the desk were dull, dry platitudes, dealing with religion on the eithical side. (1)

Methodism as a providential religion is echoed in the Deed of Union's statement that

in the Providence of God Methodism was raised up to spread Scriptural Holiness through the land by the proclamation of the Evangelical Faith. (2)

The emphasis on the moralism and evangelism of Methodism has until recently obscured the important role of devotionism³. If

the popular image of the Methodist is that of "kill-joy", then the eighteenth century image was that of "sacramentalist", for Wesley's contemporaries saw Methodist fanaticism as directed not so much towards the world but towards the altar.

Much can be learned from the epithets which were attached to the group of Oxford students of Wesley's university days. "Methodists", "Bible Moths", "Holy Club", "Sacramentarians" and "Supererogation Men" all point to the adherence of the Wesleys and their associates to what might be termed "ascetic devotionism"⁴. Wesley accepted the title "methodist" as "one who lives according to the method laid down in the Bible"⁵. The Oxford "method" included daily observation of the offices, fasting, penance and mortification. Wesley's attraction, as Orcibal has noted, was originally towards aspects of specifically Catholic method, and it was only after the Oxford and Georgia period that his asceticism took a predominantly Puritan bent⁶. In Weber's typology of ascetic activity, asceticism can take two major directions - world abnegation (weltablehrende) or world mastery (innerweltliche). The Catholic form of asceticism is typically seen as rejecting the world and concentrating on other-worldly goals, while Puritan asceticism is practised in the world and is directed towards radical transformation of the world by this-worldly means⁷.

Although the early Methodists were engaged in various forms of social

work - visiting prisoners in the Castle, for example - this was very much part of their world-rejecting asceticism⁸. It was in the later stage of Methodism that asceticism became predominantly of the type Weber called world-mastery.

While the Holy Club to some extent formed the basic model for Methodism, refinements and additions were developed as a result of Wesley's association with the Moravians⁹. The method of the virtuoso was summed up in Wesley's treatment of instituted and prudential means of grace¹⁰. The instituted means were:

- Prayer (private, family, public).
- Searching the Scriptures (by reading, meditating, hearing).
- The Lord's Supper.
- Fasting.
- Christian Conference.

The prudential means were those of Christian association and it was these forms of association which most clearly indicate the structure of Methodism as a virtuoso style of religion. Bands were composed of the most devout members, who met for mutual examination on a weekly basis. Bands reflected the discipline of penance which Wesley had established at Oxford. At a later date, it became the custom to divide the whole society into classes, which provided for both devotion and oversight.

Early Wesleyanism was, therefore, stratified into a merit-order which was based on criteria of religious virtue:

The United Societies (which are the largest of all) consist of awakened persons. Part of these, who are supposed to have remission of sins, are more closely united in the bands, who seem to walk in the light of God, compose the Select Societies. Those of them who have made shipwreck of the faith, meet apart as penitents. (11)

The stratification of the Societies into layers of merit was paralleled by a differentiation of leadership. Conference itself contained an elite group who were known as "Assistants". Preachers or "Helpers" were divided into Assistants or "Sons in the Gospel" and ordinary preachers¹². The Methodist Society as a whole was seen as an order within the Church of England which provided earnest followers with intensification of and additions to the ritual and devotion of the national church. It was precisely this accumulation of religious merit through a disciplined devotionism which distinguished Methodists from the mass of the Anglican laity and which in turn differentiated between lax and earnest Methodists.

If virtuoso religiousness, manifested in ascetic devotionism, was a major facet of early Wesleyanism, then this facet waned and all but terminated by the nineteenth century. The process by which later Methodists selected out of and added to the earlier devotional ethic is termed a "process of election". The direction of this process was determined by the emergent congruence between religious practice and secular requirements of work and class style. The end

product of this process was a mass religion.

The key to the elective process in Wesleyanism is to be found in the strain which emerged between the aristocratic elements of virtuoso religion and Wesleyan commitment to Arminianism. The purity of practice could have been maintained on the basis of stringent criteria of admission to the societies, but this was not the path taken. Internal discipline was preserved through the oversight of the class leaders, but the class discipline was progressively undermined during the nineteenth century. In the absence of strict methods of control and admission, evangelical Arminianism left Methodism wide open to the mutations of economic pressures. While ascetic devotionalism leant towards virtuosity, Arminianism pulled the societies towards mass religion. One explanation for the final dominance of Arminian, mass consequences is that ethical and devotional asceticism stimulated social mobility which created styles of living incompatible with Wesley's devotional ethic:

For the Methodists in every place grow diligent and frugal; consequently they increase in goods. Hence they proportionately increase in pride, in anger, in the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life. So, although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away. (13)

Much caution has to be exercised in an assessment of the nature and degree of Methodist expansion, simply because the historical evidence, at least before 1851, is weak. However, the broad pattern

of growth and distribution was that up to 1850 the Wesleyans had their major advance in the West Riding, Primitive Methodism in the North East and the Bible Christians in Cornwall¹⁴. In terms of social composition, there were differences between the various Methodist denominations. The Wesleyans were associated with middle-class traders, merchants, millowners and shop-keepers; Primitive Methodists with coal miners and trade unionists; Bible Christians with tin miners and agricultural workers¹⁵. Behind these differences, there was a fundamental convergence of these Methodist bodies towards over-recruitment from the middle and lower middle classes. Despite the paradox that Methodism appealed to the depressed poor through its emotionalism and to the new rich through its discipline, Methodism was a religion for rather than of the poor¹⁶. The lumpen-proletariat and the aristocracy were both absent from the Methodist class meeting, if not from the chapel¹⁷. Perhaps what was far more important for later developments was that by the 1820's key lay roles in Methodist chapels were being occupied by small manufacturers and traders:

By means of their enhanced prestige newly rich members frequently undertook to dominate the local organizations. It was less a calculated process than the contagion of an outlook which they almost imperceptibly acquired. Their standing in the community permitted them to assume authority by the subtle force of prestige. Frequently they contributed with a liberality which would be certain to add to the weight of their voiced preferences. They built chapels for the local societies, with the consequence that they often retained control of them. (18)

There was a natural convergence between the life-styles of "the newly rich members" and Methodist norms of self-discipline, family duty and rejection of luxury. In the early stages of the accumulation of prestige and property, discipline was a necessary adjunct of worldly success. The ethics of Methodist asceticism were virtues which businessmen and shop-keepers practised in their day-to-day lives. The importance of Wesleyan asceticism, however, was that it could be used to legitimate such behaviour. Religious norms made these matter-of-fact practices intrinsically meaningful¹⁹. There was far less affinity between Wesleyan practices of fasting, mortification and sacramentalism and the secular demands of trade²⁰. These religious and economic affinities resulted in a selection out of the core of traditional Methodism such that even before the end of the eighteenth century ethical injunctions gained dominance over ascetic devotionalism. The sifting of the ethical and ecclesiastical component has been succinctly expressed by John Lawson:

Busy shop-keepers approved of that part of the Methodist discipline which in the name of God bade them "scorn delights and live laborious days". They had room for regular Sunday Service and dutiful family prayers. However, the more ascetic and ecclesiastical discipline of the "morning preaching", the Friday fast, and having one's heart searched to the bottom at the penitential Band was less congenial. (21)

The relationship between social class life-styles and religious practice was reinforced by institutional changes. Of first importance was the separation of Methodism from the Church of England. The Plan of Pacification of 1795 legitimized this separation by allowing preachers to celebrate Holy Communion in Methodist preaching-houses when the Trustees and class leaders were in agreement. Apart from other implications, the Plan greatly altered religious practice in Methodism²². It allowed the traditional four-service pattern of the Methodist Sabbath - Anglican morning and evening worship and two Methodist preaching services - to decline. By the end of the nineteenth century, the use of the Anglican Prayer Book had almost completely fallen into abeyance in Methodism, although as Percy Bunting noted, some "cultured church members" still clung to it:

There still remain a considerable number of Wesleyan churches which to this end (that of orderly and reverent worship) use on Sunday morning the Church of England prayer book: and those cultured church members who have been brought up to its use are generally loth to part with it. But the bulk of modern congregations, especially where largely composed of country-bred Methodists, find in it no religious sympathy. (23)

This separation from Anglican influences was matched by a loss of characteristic Methodist practices. The Watch-night service had ceased to be held during Wesley's life. The replacement of the love-cup by individual glasses symbolized a switch from communal practices to privatized worship. While the Love-feast disappeared, communion,

which Wesley had argued ought to be practised constantly, became largely irregular and optional²⁴.

The decline of instituted means of grace was paralleled by the decline of prudential means. Of particular importance was the dismantling of the class in Methodism as a confessional meeting. Mutual examination of sins became irksome for Methodists who had achieved social standing and respectability. Sir Percy Bunting expressed the view that

There is room certainly for the hope that
by proper adaptation, the class meeting may
be made more generally acceptable and popular.
(25)

Adaptation to a more popular form of meeting meant, in practice, removing the ascetic element in the class system. The result was that the class meeting became larger and more entertaining. Whereas the Wesleyan class had a membership of around a dozen persons in the eighteenth century, the modern class membership in the 1960's is on average, one hundred and twenty-five members²⁶. Clearly an average membership of this magnitude suggests that classes have ceased to meet and the class system has been converted into a "ticket-system", whereby members receive a class ticket without attending the class. Of the fifty seven churches which were sampled in the Leeds District, only two could be said to have regular classes which fulfilled the traditional devotional and ascetic functions of the Methodist class.

Whereas ascetic devotionalism was compatible with the life-

styles of an elite group of Oxford undergraduates, it had little affinity with the routines of artisans, on the one hand, and rural workers, on the other. The virtuoso religiosity of Wesleyanism required discipline and severe standards of recruitment. Because these requirements were not maintained, Methodism was highly susceptible to change. The middle class found the world-mastery asceticism of Wesleyanism a useful religious legitimation of their pattern of life. Disprivileged groups found in Wesley's emphasis on experiential religion a channel for expressing their social and emotional deprivation²⁷.

During the nineteenth century, however, the social basis for ascetic devotionalism was progressively diminished. The virtuoso core of the tradition was, however, never entirely swamped and attempts were made to revive ascetic devotionalism by the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship in 1935. The aims of the MSF were three-fold: to re-affirm the faith that inspired the Evangelical Revival, to make the communion service central to the life of the Methodist Church and to work for re-union (principally with the Anglican Church). Members of the MSF followed a simple rule of religious life, namely

X daily prayer, daily scripture reading and a minimum monthly reception of Holy Communion. Considerable opposition to the MSF arose among many Methodist circuits. In 1937, Conference received thirteen memor-

X ials from circuits and one from synod asking for an investigation of

the principles of the MSF. Despite early opposition, the mood of the Methodist Church changed considerably after the Second World War. Methodist worship and the architecture of its churches have been greatly influenced by, among other things, the ecumenical movement and the associated revival of interest in liturgy. The change in mood does, however, appear to be confined to a somewhat small group of influential ministers rather than a change in the orientation of the laity. Data from Leeds and London suggest that the majority of the laity are firmly wedded to a mass religiosity.

Ritual²⁸

The most elementary and typical form of public ritual is, of course, attendance at Sunday worship. For Wesley and the early Methodists, observance of the Sabbath was an essential part of the week's religious activities. The band rules of the 1744 established the norm:

Constantly to attend on all ordinances of God; in particular, 1. To be at Church and at the Lord's Table every week. (29)

To a large extent, contemporary Methodists faithfully follow this injunction of weekly attendance at Church. In the Leeds District, seventy-four percent were in Church "every week or nearly every week" and fourteen percent, "at least once a month" (Table 5:1)³⁰.

However, "To be at Church" in eighteenth century Methodism meant both attendance at the Anglican Church and at the Methodist preaching house. The devout Methodist of the 1750's would hear a Methodist sermon at five in the morning, attend his parish church at the morning service and again in the afternoon for the evening service. The day's public ritual would be culminated by another Methodist sermon at five in the evening. The contemporary Methodist pattern is very different. The typical pattern today is attendance at only one service, morning or evening, on Sunday. It was found that over a half of Leeds' Methodists went to one Sunday service and only thirty-six percent went to both (Table 5:2). It would appear that the disciplined style of Sunday worship has been replaced by a mass religious style in which for the majority of Methodists Sunday worship is not seen as a demanding activity.

It has been argued already that before the beginning of the twentieth century, eucharistic worship had been greatly undermined as a central part of Methodist worship. Following the MSF initiative for more frequent communion, Conference in 1947 laid down monthly Communion as a minimum requirement. While monthly Communion does not match Wesley's "constant communion" it does represent a stiffening of virtuosity. This revival of interest in Communion is partly reflected in the fact that half of the laity receive Communion every

month and a quarter every three months (Table 5:3)³¹. However, nineteen percent still receive Communion once a year or less.

While evidence of this nature does support the interpretation of an historical decline of virtuoso standards, public ritual is only one aspect of religious practice. It is possible to claim that devotionalism rather than ritualism is the key note of Methodist worship. Such an argument has been put forward by A.R. George who claimed that in Methodism

Spontaneity is preferred to artificiality;
there is a healthy fear of merely formal
religion. (32)

Devotion

Ritual, precisely because it is public, is far more subject to changes in social values and social pressure than is private devotion. Church attendance may be a public display of social status; little social merit need necessarily be associated with private acts of piety. For this reason

Devotionalism seems an especially basic
standard for estimating the extent of
religious commitment. (33)

Within this basic standard, prayer is the most elementary and common practice.

The importance of prayer was specifically mentioned in Wesley's instituted means of grace. Family prayer was probably the most

characteristic feature of Methodist devotion. For example, the Helpers were instructed to enquire of members whether they had family prayers regularly and much of Wesley's Christian Library was given to advice on family life in which prayer was

an excellent means of preserving and increasing Love in the Relation. (34)

Most contemporary Methodists feel that prayer is an essential part of their lives, but there is considerable difference between their evaluation and actual practice. While eighty-nine percent in Leeds said that prayer was extremely important or fairly important, only forty-six percent prayed once a day or more (Tables 5:4, 5:5). Another, though less dramatic paradox, is that while the majority evaluate prayer very highly, only fifty-three percent had no doubt that their prayers were answered (Table 5:6). It seems that confidence in the efficacy of prayer is not particularly widespread despite the belief that prayer is very important.

The emphasis which has been given to the Catholic strain in Wesleyan devotionalism needs to be balanced by a similar emphasis on the Puritan element in Methodist worship. This balance is introduced by considering the stress which Puritanism placed upon individual understanding and reading of the Bible. Gordon Wakefield has put this point particularly strongly

nothing was more important in the practice of Puritan piety than the reading of Scriptures. (35)

✕ Whether or not "reading the Scriptures" was daily, serious pursuit of biblical texts or mere bibliomancy, there can be little doubt that the Bible was the main diet of Puritan devotion. It is on this Puritan criterion that contemporary Methodists fall short. Among ✕ Leeds' Methodists, only half of the church members can be said to read their Bible at all (Table 5:7). Of the Bible readers, only twelve percent read the Bible "once a day or more". The majority were "irregular Bible readers". Whatever criteria are chosen - Catholic or Puritan - the contemporary evidence demonstrates a marked trend away from disciplined, virtuoso devotionism.

The instituted means of grace - Church attendance, Holy Communion, prayer and Bible reading - were only one side of Wesleyan practice. The other important features centred on the Methodist emphasis on fellowship. The prudential means were developed for both discipline and fellowship. The Watch-night, Love-feast, bands and class meetings were in part an attempt to counter-act the individualism of the Church of England, whose parishioners Wesley described as "a rope of sand". This early emphasis on mutual support and fellowship survives in such institutions as the house-fellowship and University Methodist Society groups. Extensive friendship patterns were located in the Leeds District, where twenty-one percent had all of their five best friends in one congregation and twenty-

three percent had between three and four friends (Table 5:8). Unfortunately, this is a very poor indicator of fellowship. For one thing, it does not distinguish between frequency and intensity of friendship. Furthermore, respondents may have included kin in their list of friends and, while kinship may certainly be related to fellowship, the two are not identical. The same is true of the relationship between "friendship" and "fellowship". Despite the weakness of this indicator, at least the evidence does not contradict the statement that Methodism may be characterized by a high degree of communalism and fellowship³⁶. However, the prudential means were initially the guardians of both discipline and fellowship. As a result of the decline of Methodist discipline, one might be pardoned for asserting that contemporary Methodist fellowship has become somewhat "flabby".

Virtuoso religion is typified by a systematic drive for salvation, and where this drive takes place in the field of religious worship, it is typified by its regularity and earnestness. Mass religion, by contrast, is far more relaxed and flexible: consideration is given to the demands of daily routines and religion becomes moulded to these secular and pragmatic concerns. As a result of adherence to virtuoso religiosity, the individual becomes sharply demarcated from the religiously "unmusical" by virtue of his withdrawal

from the demands of wordly routines. A shift from virtuoso concern for disciplined prayer, communion and fasting to a less demanding religiosity underlines the important changes in Methodist religious practice. A conclusion of this nature is, of course, one-sided and, more importantly, halts the analysis too abruptly. Ritual has important inter-connections with other dimensions of religious commitment: ritual acts, it has been claimed, as a particularly important basis of religious experience. It both stimulates and channels religious experience. Therefore, any curtailment of the functions of ritual should have important repercussions in the emotional content of religion.

Chapter 5References

- (1) W.J. Townsend "The Time and Conditions" in W.J. Townsend (et al.) A New History of Methodism, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909, Vol. 1., p.132.
- (2) Deed of Union, clause 30, in H. Spencer and E. Finch The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church, London: Epworth Press, 1958, p.264.
- (3) Much of the contemporary interest in early Methodist ritual has been stimulated by A.R. George, Gordon S. Wakefield, J. Orcibal, R. Newton Flew, John C. Bowmer and David Tripp.
- (4) This chapter on religious practice is based on M. Hill and B. Turner "John Wesley and the Origin and Decline of Ascetic Devotionalism" in M. Hill (ed.) A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain, London: SCM Press (forthcoming).
- (5) The various names attached to the Oxford Holy Club are discussed in most standard works on early Methodism: cf., for example, R.E. Davies, Methodism, Harmondsworth; Penguin Books, 1963, Ch.3.
- (6) For a general discussion of the theological influences which contributed to Wesleyanism, cf. J. Orcibal "The Theological Originality of John Wesley and Continental Spirituality" in R.E. Davies and E.G. Rupp (eds.) A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, London: Epworth Press, 1965, Vol.1, pp.81-113. Wesley's dependence on the Primitive Church tradition of Anglicanism is presented in Hill and Turner, op.cit. While the origins of Wesley's theory are not particularly relevant to this chapter, the following summarizes some of these influences:

Probably most earnest men who take an interest in theology pass through a stage in which they feel strongly the glamour of Antiquity. They construct for themselves a picture of the Past vague and highly idealized/

idealized, and then long to restore once more the Golden Age that has gone. This was the stage of mind of the Methodists in 1732...The following memorandum by John Wesley shows how far this impulse was carrying them: "I believe it is a duty to observe so far as I can (1) to baptise by immersion; (2) to use Water, Oblation of Elements, Invocation, Alms, A Prothesis, in the Eucharist; (3) to pray for the faithful departed; (4) to pray standing on Sunday in Pentecost; (5) to abstain from blood and things strangled." It was only a passing phase, but it left its mark. To the end of his life Wesley was a Patristic student; he translated the Apolostic Fathers for the use of his preachers; and most of the things that were considered innovations in the societies that he organized later - the class-meetings, the love-feats, the quarterly ticket, the day-break services, the watch-nights, the separate seats for men and women - were really revivals of customs of the Primitive Church. (G.R. Balleine A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England, London: Church Book Room Press, 1951, pp.6-7).

It is a frequent observation that early Methodism had many features in common with monasticism. Thomas Shaw in his history of Cornish Methodism observed that

There was something monastic about the early Methodist withdrawal from the world; following their profession of faith they were entering an enclosed order, outwardly different from but inwardly resembling that of the nuns who came to Lanherne in 1794.

(T. Shaw A History of Cornish Methodism, Truro: D. Bradford Barton Ltd., 1967, p.26).

- (7) Empirically, of course, one does not find pure cases of either type of asceticism. The importance and utility of this distinction is to be found in its emphasis.
- (8) For a short discussion of early Methodist social work, cf. W.C. Dowling "Wesley and Social Care" in Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, Vol. XXXVI, part 5, June 1968 pp. 129-131.

- (9) The impact of Wesley's Aldersgate experience on Methodist devotionalism is not a central interest of this chapter. For various interpretations of its influence, cf. Skevington Wood The Inextinguishable Blaze, London: Paternoster Press, 1960; Skevington Wood "John Wesley's Reversion to Type", Proceedings, Vol. XXXV, February, 1966, pp.88-93; A. Lawson "John Wesley's Reversion to Type - a Rejoinder", Proceedings, Vol. XXXV, part 5, March 1966 p.125; A.S. Yates The Doctrine of Assurance, London: Epworth Press, 1952; R. Newton Flew "Methodism and the Catholic Tradition" in N.P. Williams and C. Harris (eds.) Northern Catholicism: Centenary Studies in the Oxford and Parallel Movements, London: S.P.C.K., 1933. Flew suggests that Wesley's religious practice was even strengthened by the Aldersgate experience:

But after his religious experience of 1738, John Wesley was even more regular than before. In the third year following the great change, Wesley took communion ninety-one times - that is, on average, every four days. In December 1782, his diary records fifteen communions, one every other day. (p.524).

- (10) This treatment of Methodist worship relies heavily on A.R. George "Private Devotion in the Methodist Tradition", Studia Liturgica, Vol.2, No.3, September 1963, pp.223-236.
- (11) Minutes of the 1744 Conference quoted in F. Baker "The People called Methodists: Our Polity" in Davies and Rupp, *op.cit.*
- (12) An analysis of Wesley's notion of different degrees of grace - a notion which provides the theological underpinning of Methodist stratification into layers of merit - is to be found in A.S. Yates The Doctrine of Assurance, London: Epworth Press, 1952.
- (13) Quoted in R. Southey Life of Wesley, second American edition, Vol.2., p.308.

- (14) The geographical distribution and growth of Methodism have been analyzed by R. Currie "A Macro-Theory of Methodist Growth", Proceedings, Vol. XXXVI, part 3, October 1967, pp.65-73 and Methodism Divided: a study in the sociology of ecumenicalism, London: Faber and Faber, 1968, ch.3. The two salient features of Currie's argument are that the religious boom of the nineteenth century in relation to the adult population took place between 1800-1850 and that Methodism was most successful where Anglicanism was weakest. Consequently, Methodism developed in the new industrial areas where the influence of the squire and the parson was curtailed.
- (15) W.J. Warner, The Wesleyan Movement and the Industrial Revolution, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930, studied the occupations of sixty-three of Wesley's preachers and pointed out that they were recruited from
- a fairly homogeneous group, ranging just below and just above the lower-middle class - that is, skilled artisans, small traders and small farmers. Practically all of the regular preachers, therefore, during this period of more than fifty years (the first generation of Methodists) located between "unskilled labour" and "middle class". (p.250).
- (16) The paradox that "Methodism obtained its greatest success in serving simultaneously as the religion of the industrial bourgeoisie (although here it shared the field with other Nonconformist sects) and of wide sections of the proletariat" in the early decades of the nineteenth century, is discussed in E.P. Thompson The Making of the English Working Class, Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1968, p.391 ff.
- (17) It is true, of course, that for a time around the 1750's Methodism became fashionable among a small section of the aristocracy. Lady Huntingdon, who introduced Methodism into Bath, was patron of the Calvinist Methodists. Cf. W.E.H. Lecky A History of England in the Eighteenth Century, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1883, p.616 ff.
- (18) Warner, op.cit., p.199.

- (19) While Weber was specifically concerned with the development of Calvinism as a legitimation of rational economic behaviour, he saw that Methodism was capable of the same consequences, cf. M. Weber The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (trans. T. Parsons), London: Unwin University Books, 1965, p.139 ff. Wesley himself recognized that Methodism had on occasions come to "the very edge of Calvinism."
- (20) It is important not to overstress the rejection of ecclesiastical in favour of socio-economic norms in Methodism. Shaw, op.cit, points out that Wesley was not particularly successful in combatting smuggling among Cornish Methodists. Both Shaw and Warner, op.cit, have collected evidence to show that the Methodist rejection of luxury was short-lived. It is particularly difficult to put precise dates on these changing attitudes and practices but it is probably the case that by the 1790's much of the ecclesiastical asceticism had been tacitly dropped by local chapel-goers and by the 1820's serious inroads into socio-economic asceticism had occurred.
- (21) J. Lawson "the People called Methodists: Our Doctrines" in Davies and Rupp, op.cit., p.207.
- (22) To some extent, the Plan legalized a de facto separation of Methodism and Anglicanism.
- (23) P. Bunting "Lines of Development and Steps towards Reunion" in Townsend, op.cit., Vol.2., p.491.
- (24) T. Jackson (ed.) The Works of John Wesley, London, 1831, "The Duty of Constant Communion", sermon C1, Vol. VII, pp. 147-57, outlines of Wesley's belief that "frequent communion" was insufficient.
- (25) Bunting in Townsend, op.cit., p.491.
- (26) On the assumption that there is one class leader to every Methodist class-meeting and that every Methodist church member is by definition a class member, the average class size is obtained by dividing the total membership by the number of class leaders. The average class size in the Leeds' District between 1961 and 1966 was one hundred and twenty-seven persons. Currie, op.cit., p.128 found that in 1816 the

chapel at Probus had classes of an average of eighteen persons, while between 1886 - 1905 the median class at Spring Head (Wednesbury) was seventy-three.

- (27) However, these orientations of discipline, on the one hand, and emotionalism, on the other, were of a temporary nature. The decline of emotionalism will be examined in the following chapter.
- (28) In making the distinction between ritual and devotion, the chapter adopts the procedure employed by R. Stark and C.Y. Glock Patterns of Religious Commitment: Volume 1, American Piety: The nature of religious commitment, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1968, p.15.
- (29) Jackson, op.cit., Works, Vol. VIII, pp.273-4.
- (30) M. Hill in a paper circulated to members of the Methodist Sociological Group, part of which was published in M. Hill and P. Wakeford "Disembodied Ecumenicalism: a Survey of the Members of Four Methodist Churches in or near London" in D. Martin A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain 2, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969, pp. 19-46, found rather similar patterns of church attendance. In the London area, seventy percent attended on average once a week and twenty-one percent attended on average once a month.
- (31) Hill, *ibid.*, reported that sixty-two percent in the London area received Communion monthly.
- (32) A.R. George, op.cit., p.234.
- (33) Stark and Glock, op.cit., p.108.
- (34) Quoted from Philip Henry in J. Wesley A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts from and Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity which have been published in the English Tongue, 2nd edition, London: T. Corduex, Vol. XXXVIII, p.58.
- (35) G.S. Wakefield Puritan Devotion: its place in the development of Christian Piety, London: Epworth Press, 1957, p.14.
- (36) Hill, op.cit., reported that many respondents in free comments referred to the importance of fellowship in the Methodist Church.

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Table 5:1

"How often do you attend Sunday
worship services?" (Percentage)

X	Every week of nearly every week.	74.2
	At least once a month	13.8
	At least once a year.	9.5
	Less than once a year.	1.9
	No answer.	x
	Total	100.0
	N.	(342)

x Less than 1%

Table 5:2

"Do you attend morning, evening or
both worship services?" (Percentage)

Morning	31.0
Evening	30.0
Both	35.7
Afternoon ¹	1.0
No answer	2.3
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

1. Allowance for afternoon services in rural areas was not made in the questionnaire, but some respondents drew attention to this error.

Table 5:3

"How often do you receive Holy Communion?"
(Percentage)

Every month	49.6
Every three months	24.6
Between six and nine months	3.9
Every year	5.1
% at least every year	83.2
Less than once a year	13.9
No answer	2.9
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 5:4

"How important is prayer in your Life?"
(Percentage)

Extremely important	48.1
Fairly important	40.8
Not too important	7.8
Not important	1.7
No answer	1.6
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 5:5"How often do you pray?"(Percentage)

Regularly, once a day or more.	46.1
Quite often, but not at regular intervals.	26.0
Once a week or more.	9.4
Never or hardly ever.	17.1
No answer.	1.4
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 5:6

"Do you feel your prayers are answered?"
(Percentage)

Yes, I have no doubt they are.	53.2
I feel they are, but I'm not always sure.	23.3
I don't feel they really are.	7.0
None of these represent what I feel.	14.6
No answer.	1.9
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 5:7"How often do you read the Bible at home?"(Percentage)

Once a day or more	11.6
At least once a week.	9.4
Quite often but not regularly	31.4
☞ Bible Readers.	52.4
Seldom.	29.1
Rarely or never.	15.9
No answer.	2.6
Total.	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 5:8

"Of your five best friends, how many are
members of your congregation?"

(Percentage)

None	23.9
One	12.9
Two	16.6
Three	15.6
Four	6.9
Five	20.9
No answer	3.2
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Chapter 6Religious Experience

About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, in 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. (1)

Wesley's conversion in May 1738 is typical of the religious experience of early Methodists and pinpoints many central tenets of what Wesley described as the theology of "the way to Heaven"². Wesley's younger brother, Charles, had undergone a similar experience three days earlier and no doubt that event was important in the immediate background of Wesley's Aldersgate conversion. Salvation from "the law of sin and death" was the common theme running through the lives of the leaders of Methodism. One other example can be given from the life of George Whitfield, whom Davies called the "originator of the Methodist Revival"³. At the age of twenty-one, in 1735, Whit wrote that

I was delivered from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me. The spirit of mourning was taken from me, and I knew what it was truly to rejoice in God my Saviour, and for some time I could not avoid singing psalms wherever I was. (4)

It would be wrong to over-emphasize the emotive content of these three conversion experiences and others like them in early Methodism. While in the Wesleys' and Whitefield's case, conversion was perceived as an instantaneous "warming of the heart", the experience was preceded by a long period of devotional discipline and study in the Oxford Holy Club and gave rise, not to glossolalia or to convulsions, but to the singing of hymns and to prayer⁵. Their conversion was not from a life of sensuality and profligacy, but from the "almost Christian" to the "all Christian", that is from an intellectual interest in Christian belief to experiential conviction⁶. The problem which this chapter will explore is why the conversion experiences of post-Oxford Methodists did not have this restrained quality and why, as a result, restraints were introduced. In order to approach this issue, it is necessary to examine some aspects of Wesley's theology of "the way to Heaven", the nature of field-preaching and the changing social composition of Methodism.

Rather than attempt a comprehensive account of Wesleyan theology - part of which has already been examined in chapter four - those elements of Wesley's doctrine of grace which are of sociological interest in understanding conversion experience will be singled out. Although Wesley fought a life-long theological battle with Calvinism, his theological ideas, especially that of sin, came to the "very edge of

Calvinism"⁷. Wesley held that all men are sinful because they inherit the original sin of Adam: human sin is one of total depravity. The sinfulness of men, however, is mitigated by the moral law of God, human reason, conscience and freedom given by the grace of God. All of these mitigating elements enable men to repent their sins and to receive faith. Wesley came to recognize two stages of faith: in the first stage, a person is a servant of God when he is in a state of acceptance with God and, in the second, a person may become a son of God when he has full assurance of faith and a personal conviction that Christ has "taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death". Such an assurance is accompanied by

an humble joy to which the presumptuous man is a stranger: and by the keeping of God's commandments. (8)

Salvation from sin is by the free gift of faith by God and the consequences of this gift are inner conviction leading to sanctification. The weight of Wesley's argument, as Davies put it,

is on what God the Holy Spirit is willing to do for the believer, not on what the believer may come to feel. (9)

Although this may have been the theological intention the sociological consequences were somewhat different. The doctrine of original sin and the fear of "the wrath to come" generated anxieties over the certitudo salutis. Despite the divergence of theology, the

divergence of theology, the psychological anxieties of Calvinism and Methodism were similar. Where there existed uncertainty about salvation, emotional feeling became the main token of God's acceptance of the individual. Because the "almost Christian" could never be entirely sure of "what God the Holy Spirit is willing to do for the believer", he came to rely on "what the believer may come to feel"¹⁰. Emotionalism was both an inner certainty and an outward demonstration of the possession of a spiritual status:

it (the conversion experience) distinguishes the true convert in his own eyes and those of others by the fact that sin at least no longer has power over him. (11)

It was not surprising, therefore, that the "humble joy" which should, according to Wesley, accompany full assurance, took on a more exuberant and exotic form among Methodists. Wesley's description of conversions which were reported on 14th July, 1759 may be taken as an account of typical scenes in early Methodism:

Several fell to the ground, some of whom seemed dead, others in the agonies of death, the violence of their bodily convulsions exceeding all description. There was also great crying and agonizing in prayer, mixed with deep and deadly groans on every side.

When sermon was ended, one brought good tidings to Mr. Berridge from Granchester, that God had there broken down seventeen persons last week by the singing of hymns only; and that a child, seven years old, sees many/

many visions and astonishes the neighbours with her innocent, awful manner of declaring them. (12)

The "good tidings" went somewhat stale when the leaders of the revival realized that many counterfeited being "broken down" by the Lord.

The consequence of many revival meetings was to drive attention away from inner conviction to outward demonstration. The Wesleys themselves became aware of this danger:

X Many, no doubt, were, at our first preaching struck down, both soul and body, into the depth of distress. Their outward affections were easy to be imitated. (13)

Lay Methodist converts interpreted revival meetings as invitations to exhibit convulsions and glossolalia and, while some Methodist Leaders frowned on the phenomena, expected such exhibitions to take place. In short, many converts were taking up an available stereotyped role. In certain circumstances, there were "proper" signs and places for conversion:

The Victorian Methodists of Bridgerule - that parish then athwart the Devon and Cornwall border - suspected the reality of John Chapman's conversion because it had not taken place in the chapel in the proper way: but their very suspicion shows how easily even so personal an experience as conversion became stereotyped. (14)

Methodist leaders who had become aware of the dangers of stereotyping attempted to curb the outward demonstration of conversion.

Wesley, for example, was sensitive to the criticisms that Methodists were "enthusiasts" and that assurance could easily be a prelude to antinomianism. Furthermore, there was, from the point of view of respectable Methodists, something almost indecent about the paroxysms of converted labourers, which both Thompson and Hobsbawm saw as serving to bring emotional release from the hardship and routine of work¹⁵. Charles Wesley noted that "many more of the gentry" attended Methodist meetings when emotional extravagances were absent and John Wesley condemned excessive emotionalism for "bringing the real work into contempt".

Because the outward signs of conversion became suspect, the Wesleyan emphasis on conversion-preaching diminished in the nineteenth century. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, emotional conversion was more characteristic of the Primitive Methodists. It is interesting to note that one of the reasons for the separation of the Primitive Methodists from the main body of Methodism was the "irregularities" of their revivalism. Under the influence of the American Lorenzo Dow, Hugh Bourne and Daniel Shubotham had started camp-meetings at Mow Cop with considerable and dramatic success. After two major meetings at Mow Cop, the Wesleyan authorities were disturbed by the reports of the methods and results of Bourne. The Liverpool Conference of 1807 expressed the view that

It is our judgment that, even supposing such meetings be allowable in America, they are highly improper in England, and likely to be productive of considerable mischief; and we disclaim all connexion with them.(16)

If by 1807 the Wesleyans were anxious to rid themselves of these "highly improper" practices, the Primitive Methodist leadership was by the 1820's ready to restrain excessive conversion phenomena. In 1828, Bourne attempted to mitigate extremism by giving the advice of the Connexion to those experiencing visions:

None to go into visions if they can avoid it.
Not to lay too much stress upon it. That faith, plain faith, which worketh by love, is greater than these things; but that if anyone's faith was strengthened by them, so far it is well. (17)

In the early nineteenth century, revivalism was a common feature of the English landscape. Wesleyan teaching on salvation by faith and field-preaching gave rise to extreme emotionalism which was both a relief from secular hardships and a token of inner election. Wesleyans, anxious not to jeopardise their organization by becoming identified with antinomianism, attempted to restrict emotional revivalism. In part, Methodism protected itself from the influence of superficial conversion by internal discipline in the class system¹⁸. By the middle of the nineteenth century, revivalism became increasingly incompatible with Methodist social status: the change from revival to child training as the main form of recruitment has important implications

for Methodist beliefs and growth rate.

Whereas religion for the peasant and labourer can compensate his worldly misfortune by sustaining a belief in future reward, the religion of the middle and upper classes legitimates the present fortune by the belief that this is a sign of their inner worthiness. The fortunate need to know more than that they have been successful; the fortunate man

is seldom satisfied with the fact of being fortunate. Beyond this, he needs to know that he has a right to his good fortune. He wants to be convinced that he "deserves" it, and above all, that he deserves it in comparison with others. He wishes to be allowed the belief that the less fortunate also merely experience his due. Good fortune thus wants to be "legitimate" fortune. (19)

The fortunate, therefore, are little inclined to view themselves as religiously unworthy, as "carriers" of Original Sin. Rather they seek a theodicy which is in keeping with their social status. While it would be difficult to substantiate the point adequately, it seems plausible that this sort of process of changing theodicies occurred in Victorian Methodism. The successful Methodist did not find meaningful a religious doctrine which convicted him of total depravity from which he required saving. Currie, quoting from the Stamford Mercury of 1883, pinpointed this desire for theological recognition of social worth:

When will religious revivalists... ..
 recognize the fact that no field for their
 exertions exists amongst the uniformly in-
 telligent and highly virtuous inhabitants of
 this place? "They that be whole need not a
 physician". (20)

While the psychological processes which undermined the demand for a doctrine of sin may be incapable of adequate documentation, the socio-economic changes which curbed the need for conversion seem more obvious. The alternative to the state of grace was "error, guilt, sorrow, fear, pain, disease and death"²¹ It is very easy to forget how real these theological categories were in psychological, social and physical terms in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The society to which Wesley and Whitefield preached had little or no skill in medicine and sanitation. Consequently, infantile mortality was high, disease rampant, surgery brutal. Wesley's description of hell rang true in the daily experiences of the people who flocked to hear him preach salvation. The Methodist heaven offered not only relief from the gnawing fear of disease but from the back-breaking routine of the labourer's work-situation. The socio-psychological realities in which conversion made sense were gradually undermined by technological advances and by the improved status of the working class. Because by the end of the nineteenth century, medical innovation had eliminated many killing diseases and trade unionism had made the work-situation of the working class more bearable, fear was no longer a

significant factor in religious conversion. In 1908, S. Peake, the Primitive Methodist scholar, observed that the revivalist

cannot, indeed, now appeal to the sense of terror as his predecessor could. The almost universal disbelief among educated Protestants in material hell-fire has certainly weakened the urgency of appeal. But probably the chief reason why the missionary has largely abandoned the appeal to terror is that he finds that it meets with very little response. In the widespread breakdown of belief with which we are at present confronted, very many have practically ceased to believe that, even if there should be a future life, they have anything to dread in it. (22)

The decline of "the sense of terror" took away a major lynch-pin in the conversion experience.

Contemporary Religious Experiences

Before examining the data on religious experience from the survey of Methodism in Leeds, it is necessary to discuss two major problems in the research. Firstly, although data from structured items are rich, free responses were sparse. Experiences which were acknowledged in the structured section of the questionnaire were frequently not reported in the unstructured section. For example, when the free responses were categorized in terms of Stark's taxonomy of religious experience, seventeen percent reported confirming experiences, but just under half did so in the structured section (Table 6:1)²³. The explanation of this apparent discontinuity which was put forward by Stark to account for a parallel finding in his research was that respondents were not asked to list all their religious experiences. Furthermore, respondents may not share the sociologist's definition of what it means to have a "religious experience"²⁴. The first explanation is plausible, but the second raises more acute difficulties. Close examination of unstructured responses showed that respondents' definitions of religious experiences were more vague, more elusive and, in some ways, less "religious" than the taxonomy allowed for.

The second shortcoming is that the structured items did not cover all the possibilities which had been built into the taxonomy.

The taxonomy was dichotomized into divine and diabolical experiences. No diabolical experience was reported in free responses and only one structured item attempted to explore this dimension of experience. Because the data on diabolical experiences are weak, the discussion of the chapter will focus on experiences of the divine. In the divine experience category, no data were collected on ecstatic and revelational experiences. As a result of these omissions, the data are mainly from two major types - and their subtypes - of divine experience, namely confirming and responsive experiences.

The most common and least intimate type is the confirming experience which involves a sudden awareness that the beliefs one holds are valid. The confirming type is dichotomized into general and specific awareness of sacredness. Generalized confirming experiences are typically associated with religious ritual, the individual's life-cycle and illness. While no item on this subtype was included in the structured section of the questionnaire, the majority of free responses fell in this category. Generalized confirming experiences were often reported in connection with religious ritual -

"The very first time I took Holy Communion was very moving to me."

"The feeling I had when I was first made a Church member."

"Reading a lesson in a pulpit in Chapel."

with the individual's life-cycle -

"Deciding to go out with the girl I shall now marry."

"After a few years of hoping and many prayers, a feeling of great joy and thanksgiving when I knew I was going to have my first child."

and finally with illness -

"Removal of fear when surgery was necessary, turning illness into an experience which became a blessing."

"At a prayer meeting shortly after my father had been killed."

It was evident from the data that Stark's definition of a generalized confirming experience as a diffuse, emotional experience was adequate for many experiences which respondents considered to be of a religious nature. However, the notion that these experiences included some awareness of "the sacred" seemed too extravagant. The term "significance" rather than "sacredness" was closer to the nature of such experiences. This weaker term was more applicable to many reports which could not be classified in Stark's terms. The following reports, for example, were significant, not necessarily sacred, experiences:

"An extremely deep feeling of remorse on hearing of the death of President John F. Kennedy whom I regarded as a crusader for good in this world."

and

"A group of young evangelists were speaking in Leeds one evening, when a woman who was the worse for drink caused a riot, taking

the Lord' name in vain. I felt as if God wanted me to do something on the spot."

The second subtype of the confirming experience is a specific awareness of divinity, often in a specific location. Such an experience involves more than a general recognition of the existence of sacredness. In response to the structured item, "A feeling that you were somehow in the presence of God", the majority of respondents felt that they had undergone such an encounter with God. In fact, forty-nine percent were sure and thirty-three percent thought they had experienced the presence of God (Table 6:2). In structured items there was evidence of very common experiences of a specific nature, but in free responses it was all but impossible to differentiate between general and specific awareness of the divine. Stark, for example, gave instances of specific confirming experiences which occurred in connection with nature. In the Leeds' data, there were, similarly, examples of reverence for nature, but in practice it was extremely difficult to classify these into different subtypes. The problem was made difficult by the brevity of many responses:

"Feeling of awe on a mountain top, overlooking a sea of cloud, with occasional peaks poking up like islands."

and

"In a group discussion on hill tops near the sea."

and

"Being aware of God's creation in nature
when watching the sunset over the Alps in
Switzerland."

While taxonomies are necessary and important in the initial stages of any scientific study, on existing data it is at present impossible to distinguish between feelings of significance, experiences of specific and general sacredness.

A less frequent, more intimate and specific encounter with a sacred actor is the responsive type. Stark distinguished between confirming and responsive types in terms of intimacy:

Where the confirming experience indicates only an awareness of the existence or presence of divinity, the responsive refers to occurrences when a person feels this awareness is mutual.
(25)

This taxonomy includes three subtypes of responsive experiences: miraculous, sanctioning and salvational experiences. In miraculous experiences, the divine pays special attention to the individual either by saving him from some disaster or by curing illness. The negative side of miraculous events are those involving a divine sanction: the individual feels that the divine has either punished him for some wrong or hinders the individual in his achievement of goals. Salvational experiences include those experiences of election, salvation and cleansing of sins.

The questionnaire did not contain any item on miraculous experiences, but free responses suggested that these encounters were not

uncommon, especially among the older generation of men. The most common miraculous event involved some divine protection of the individual from accident or danger:

X "Calais May 1940. Drove a car in wartime - racing along a road when felt a heavy hand on left shoulder. Stopped immediately - high building completely collapsed on road. Then thanked God. I could have won a V.C. if anyone around. No fear from then on."

"My resignation to the protection and care of God during Active Service in France in 1918 when I experienced no fear regarding survival, even under artillery, machine-gun and rifle fire, plus aerial gas attacks."

"In a road accident where car turned over. I could have been killed but God saved me and boyfriend."

"When a friend had a T.B. leg healed by faith. After many operations it dried up at the touch of a man from God."

and

"After doctors had given up hope of reviving me (I'd been unconscious for 4 hours and could hardly breathe) I came round and after a long struggle lived to tell the tale."

While experiences of God's protection and special concern were fairly common among Methodists, experiences of God's sanction were rare.

There was no evidence of sanctioning experiences in free responses.

When asked whether they had experienced "A feeling of being punished

X by God for something you have don", fifty-four percent said that they had not and only ten percent were sure that they had been punished (Table 6:3). One implication of this finding is that, while Methodists experience God as a benign protector, God has lost potency as a corrector of human error. The notion that Methodism has removed the fear of God from its theological perspective leads naturally to a consideration of the main subject of this chapter, namely the decline of salvational experience.

The antinomian implications of conversion experience and the possibility that such experiences were stereotyped encouraged Methodism to withdraw from revivalism. One organizational implication of this shift in emphasis was that over time Methodism became increasingly dependent on an inherited rather than converted membership²⁶. As conversion became less encouraged, it became less experienced. As a result, the main road into Methodism was through the family. The data from Leeds demonstrate the contemporary high-water mark of such developments.

When asked whether they had ever experienced a "sense of being saved in Christ" only twenty-nine percent said "Yes I'm sure I have" and twenty-seven percent thought they had (Table 6:4). While the causes of Methodist withdrawal from an emphasis on salvation

experience are to be found in complex changes in organizational and social composition, one important factor in this situation is derived from changes in belief. Salvation logically implies that the believer has something to be saved from. In modern Methodism, beliefs which delineate the state of sin have been greatly weakened. In traditional terms, men were saved from Original Sin but belief in the curse of the Fall of Adam - a central belief of Wesleyanism - is no longer accepted. When asked whether they thought it true or not that "A child is born into the world already guilty of sin" only ten percent said "completely true", while seventy-eight percent thought this doctrine was "probably not" or "definitely not true" (Table 6:5)

Although the fears of Original Sin no longer trouble present day Methodists, it could be argued that they have more commitment to the problems of what might be termed "present sin". What men do in this world is now held to be of greater significance than their inheritance of human wickedness. Thus, thirty-five percent thought that the statement "What we do in this life will determine what we do in the hereafter" was "completely true" and thirty-five percent answered "probably true" (Table 6:6). The "hereafter", however, holds little danger for the contemporary Methodists, since seventy percent said they would probably "go to heaven" after death (Table 6:7). Of those who gave an unorthodox response, seventeen percent thought they would

"simply stop existing". In both cases any concept of judgment or punishment is precluded. Finally, the majority were very certain about this belief: only nineteen percent were either "not very certain" or "fairly uncertain" of the answer they had given (Table 6:8).

The salvational experience of the Wesleys which allowed them full assurance of their heavenly acceptance is no longer a salient feature of modern Methodism. The conviction of sin, whether Original or present, and the fear of "the wrath to come" can no longer serve as a basis of the evangelist's appeal. The "terror" of such a theology, as Peake correctly observed, has disappeared and with it the motivation to be saved.

Conclusion: Belief, Ritual and Experience²⁷

Methodism was both an evangelical and a sacramental revival and gave rise to religious societies whose members adhered to a disciplined and varied ritual life within the Anglican Church. Methodist ritual - constant Communion, fasting, fervid prayer, Watch-night, Love-feast and Covenant Service - gave that characteristic note of both discipline and fellowship in the early societies. The class-meeting and band system were the strongest embodiments of such communalism. With separation from the Church of England, social mobility and denominationalization, the devotional practices of the Oxford Holy Club were largely abandoned. The sacramental emphasis, the discipline and the fellowship were considerably undermined and the Watch-night and Love-feast disappeared. Today, the Methodist class meeting exists in name only. The result of these changes has been to narrow the channels through which emotion and enthusiasm could be expressed. Although the outlet has been curtailed, the social and religious causes of emotional conversion have also been largely removed.

The impoverishment of contemporary worship is evident when one considers the ritual and devotional life of church members. Sunday worship is now the main, probably the only, collective ritual in which all members of the church share. In Leeds, only three-quarters of the

church members attended Sunday worship weekly. Attendance at the central rite of Christianity is even less frequent: only half of Leeds' Methodists are at Communion every month. Private devotion, as distinct from public ritual, is less enfeebled, since prayer is very highly evaluated and forty-six percent pray "once a day or more". However, only a minority read the Bible in their private devotional life. In a situation where ritual is curtailed and largely privatized, ritual functions - social solidarity and collective effervescence, as Durkheim described them - are mainly inoperative.

Hand in hand with ritual decline is a loss of certainty over fundamental beliefs, on the one hand: a divorce between belief and experiential confirmation, on the other. Examining the loss of conviction in belief first, it was found that sixty-three percent had no doubts about the existence of God, while sixty-nine percent had no uncertainty about the divinity of Jesus. However, only fifty-two percent were certain that they had found "the answers to the meaning and purpose of life" and many of these had inherited a meaning rather than being converted to it. Beliefs which traditionally were manipulated to induce anxieties associated with religious emotionalism and conversion, are frequently unacceptable. Original Sin, a God of judgment, the fear of future retribution have been discarded. While there is some doubt over the actuality of the supernatural, there is

little reason to fear its existence. Once the dark side of Christianity begins to recede, so does the light side: there is nothing from which men need converting.

Although Methodists are exhorted to believe in the sacred realm, they are not consistently and openly encouraged to experience it. The religious experiences of church members belong to the less exuberant type. While intimate contacts with the sacred were rare, eighty-two percent were either sure or thought they had experienced a "feeling of the presence of God". Just as God is not believed to be dreadful or dangerous, so He is not experienced as such. In particular, God is not experienced as a punishing figure: only ten percent thought that at some time they had undergone a "feeling of being punished by God" for something they had done.

Extreme expression of experiences of the sacred are rare, but many church members report some form of religious experience, particularly of the confirming type. This finding, however, ought not to obscure the important separation of cognitive and experiential certainty. This point is borne out clearly when responses in which no doubt was expressed are compared. Although sixty-three percent had no doubt concerning the existence of God, only fifty percent claimed to have felt "the presence of God" and only ten percent had experienced a divine punishment. Similarly, sixty-nine percent believed in the divinity of Christ, but only twenty-nine percent were

sure they had been saved through Christ. It was claimed that an important function of all religious experiences is to confirm the existence of sacred forces. Wesley certainly felt this to be the case and argued that personal experiences were more compelling than introspection. In modern Methodism, since dramatic experiences of conversion and certainty are not encouraged, the experiential base of religious belief has been unwittingly diminished.

Chapter 6.References

- (1) John Wesley's conversion experience at Aldersgate, recorded in his journal for May 24th, 1739 is discussed in most of the standard histories of Methodism. The fullest account is probably found in W.J. Townsend (et al.) A New History of Methodism, London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1909, Vol.1, p.199 ff.
- (2) This concept is to be found in E.H. Sugden (ed) Standard Sermons of John Wesley, London: Epworth Press, 1931, p.31 ff.
- (3) R.E. Davies Methodism, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963, p.65.
- (4) Quoted in Townsend, op.cit., p.260.
- (5) Some authors assert that there was a radical break in Wesley's religious career after the Aldersgate conversion. Davies, op.cit., claimed that the devout life of the Holy Club did not give Wesley "any particular joy or freedom". In part one of this thesis, I have taken the position that there was no real discontinuity with either his early theology or practice after Aldersgate. Rather the religious experience gave the devout life an extra dimension without discrediting the Oxford practices.
- (6) Cf. Davies' discussion of "experimental religion" in R.E. Davies and E.C. Rupp (eds.) A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, London: Epworth Press, 1965, Ch.5. Davies defined experimental religion as "a religion which is not more theory or speculation or intellectual conviction but personal knowledge of the 'life of God in the soul of man' ", p.149.
- (7) Minutes of the Conversation with the Preachers at Bristol, 1745.

- (8) Sugden, Sermons, op.cit., Vol.1, p.214.
- (9) Davies in Davies and Rupp, op.cit., p.165.
- (10) One could discover a parallel between the Quaker idea of "openings" to God and the Methodist emphasis on experience as the main channel of communication between man and God. The other openings or channels which are seen to be available in religion are through belief and practice.
- (11) Max Weber The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, (translated by T. Parson) London: Unwin University Books, 1965, p.141.
- (12) N. Curnock (ed.) The Journal of John Wesley London: Kelly, Vol.LV, p.336.
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Table 6:1

Classification of Free Responses
for Religious Experience (Percentage)

"Would you describe any experience, which you have had in your adult life, and which at the time you thought of as a distinctly religious experience?"

Type of Religious Experience	% Reported in Free Response
Confirming	17.3
Responsive	11.9
Ecstatic	x
Revelational	0.0
No description offered	70.6
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

x Less than 1%

Table 6:2

Confirming Experience - "A feeling that you
were somehow in the presence of God." (Percentage).

Yes I'm sure I have	49.1
Yes, I think I have	32.6
No	12.8
No answer	5.5
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 6:3

Responsive Experiences: Sanctioning
"A feeling of being punished by God
for something you have done." (Percentage)

Yes, I'm sure I have	10.1
Yes, I think I have	19.8
No	54.0
No answer	16.1
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 6:4

Responsive Experience: Salvational
"A sense of being saved in Christ"
(Percentage)

Yes, I'm sure I have	29.4
Yes, I think I have	26.7
No	27.1
No answer	16.8
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 6:5

Original Sin, "A child is born into the world
already guilty of sin" (Percentage)

Completely true	10.1
Probably true	5.2
Probably not/ Definitely not true	78.4
No answer	6.3
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 6:6

Present Sin, "What we do in this life will
determine what we do in the hereafter" (Percentage)

Completely true	35.3
Probably true	35.4
Probably not/ Definitely not true	21.6
No answer	7.7
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 6:7

Life after Death, "What do you think will
happen to you after death?" (Percentage)

Go to purgatory	3.2
Go to Hell	x
Simply stop existing	17.0
Go to Heaven	70.1
No answer	19.0
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

x Less than 1%

Table 6:8

Certainty of Response to question
"What do you think will happen to you after death?"
(Percentage)

Very certain	32.6
Fairly certain	41.1
Not very certain or fairly uncertain	18.7
No answer.	7.6
Total	100.0
N.	(312)

Part 2

Religious Organization.

Chapter 7Theories of Religious OrganizationsCritiques of the Church-sect typology

The Church-sect typology has become a hallmark of the sociology of religion. Indeed Demerath and Hammond go so far as to say

insofar as the distinction has been used to refer to the processes by which churches spawn sects that in turn become churches over time, its dynamic formulation has been to the sociology of religion what Marxian theory has been to the social sciences as a whole. (1)

However, like most good hallmarks, the typology has become the object of considerable criticism and concern. Questions about the adequacy of the typology have themselves become somewhat "stale and routine"². Because I tend to agree with Eister that over-involvement in criticism may lead to unnecessary masochism, it is not the intention of this chapter to develop any comprehensive critique of the typology. Rather the chapter will examine certain salient problems in order to develop a theoretical framework for raising problems of Methodist organization, recruitment and ecumenism³.

Some basic problems the Church-sect typology shares with ideal types. Ideal types have variously been understood as theories, yardsticks for comparative analysis, imaginative reconstructions, particular types of abstractions and models, and characterizations of extreme

situations.⁴ Disagreement exists over what ideal types are and how they are constructed. Because of this basic uncertainty, it is always difficult to handle the problem of counter-evidence. If ideal types are theories, then counter-evidence would eventually lead to its falsification. If ideal types are imaginative reconstructions of "ideal" situations, then empirical disconfirmation may simply be rejected as irrelevant to the usefulness of the particular ideal type. The apparent disconfirmation of an ideal type may lead to a range of responses: abandonment of the ideal type, development of new ideal types or subtypes, development of additional typological attributes to cope with disconfirmation, rejection of disconfirming cases. The dilemma of how to interpret counter-examples has certainly characterized the use of the Church-sect typology. Troeltsch's initial dichotomy of Church and sect is now splintered into, cult, stable sect, sectarian subtypes, denomination, national and internal Church as a result of attempts to develop additional types to cope with "deviant" examples⁵. Typological classification of Methodism has been particularly problematic.

Some sociologists have classified Methodism directly in terms of a Church-sect dichotomy. Chamerlayne, for example, claimed that between 1740-50 and 1930-40 British Methodism passed from a conversionist sect to Church. In the early period, the organization of Methodism

was on sect-type lines, particularly in the local meeting-places, where the Societies and Bands were normally led by laymen.....In their mode of worship, behaviour patterns and ritual, the early Methodists displayed the characteristics of the sect-type developing their own "means of grace", in the class-meetings and band-meetings, love-feasts, watch-nights, prayer-meetings and covenant services. In these acts of worship, the people as a whole took a large part, with the use of extempore prayer, hymn-singing and exhortation. (6)

Chamberlayne, however, found his simple dichotomy encumbered by the existence of certain Church-type traits in early Methodism. The Methodist emphasis on sacraments and the bureaucratic features of Methodism led Chamberlayne to conclude that

it retained church-type features from the beginning. (7)

In his analysis of American Methodism, Brewer noted the same discrepancy:

Ideologically, Methodism was basically sect-type in the beginning although it never freed itself of some church-type traits inherited from the Church of England. (8)

In fact, the "church-type traits" of early Methodism were so prominent, that many sociologists have interpreted early Methodism as a religious order in the Church of England.

Chamberlayne approached this position in noting that Methodism

is close to the definition of an "order" because in its prime movers, John and Charles Wesley, as in its cleavage to some link with

the Church of England, it retained church-type features....(9)

It is interesting to record that the proximity of early Methodism to a religious-order struck Troeltsch forcibly. He commented that Methodism

is something between an Order, established upon a foundation of unconditional obedience and minute mutual control, like the Jesuit Order (with which Methodism was compared in its early days), and a society of earnest Christians, proving the reality of their faith by their lives, founded upon entirely voluntary membership in which the members have a permanent share, as in Baptist organizations.
(10)

The Methodist emphasis on sacramentalism, its internal differentiation and its concern for oversight support the view that early Methodism was an example of a religious order. As Kissack has observed, watchfulness was a key element in early Methodism:

Since holiness was the overriding doctrinal objective, Church Order must have as its mainspring a corresponding principle. This was "Watchfulness". (11)

Furthermore, this view of early Methodism comes much closer to the actor's own definition of the situation than is implicit in the analysis of Methodism as a "conversionist sect". Methodists defined themselves in organizational terms as "societies" within the Church rather than as a schismatic sect. Some Methodists no doubt would supported a schism from an early date, but this eventuality was not

possible while Wesley was firmly in control of the societies.

A similar view has been argued by David Martin, although his main concern was to reject the applicability of the sect-type to such denominations as Methodism and Congregationalism. Martin points to the fact that some denominations originated as Ecclesiola in Ecclesia rather than as sects:

The non-sectarian origins of Methodism are even clearer. The primary leadership of the movement was, of course, middle class, and the whole ethos of Methodism reflected that fact. Admittedly the ethical discipline of the early Methodist societies within the Church of England had a sectarian quality; but then so also has that of the Third Order of St. Dominic. The history of Methodism together with that of the Congregationalists and to some extent the Baptists begins in a "Spiritual Brotherhood" or "Holy Club" which in turn becomes Ecclesiola in Ecclesia, and finally a denomination, but at no point approximates to a sect. (12)

Martin's other important contribution to the sociology of the denomination was his observation that the emphasis on tolerance, pragmatism and individualism distinguishes the denomination from both Church and sect. Denominations are tolerant in that they regard themselves as one form of religious organization on a par with other similar denominations; denominations reject both sectarian exclusiveness and the Church concept of extra Ecclesiam nulla salus. They are pragmatic in that they hold to flexible position on church order. Denominations

avoid extremes of sectarian anarchy and Church collectivism by stressing the autonomy of the individual.

Clearly these criteria of denomination are especially relevant to Methodism. Wesley's view of the Primitive Church provided a warrant for a flexible form of church government. In his interpretation Wesley was influenced by Lord King and Dr. Stillingfleet. From the former's Primitive Church, Wesley concluded that

bishops and presbyters are essentially of one order....and that originally every Christian congregation was a church independent of all others. (13)

and from the latter he derived even greater principles of organizational flexibility, believing that:

neither Christ nor his apostles prescribed any particular form of Church Government, and that the plea for the divine right of episcopacy was never heard in the Primitive Church. (14)

It is also the case that Wesley was pragmatic in his orientation in so far as he developed field-preaching, class leaders and circuits to meet particular needs rather than to satisfy any dogmatic view of church structure. Where Martin's criteria seem dubious is firstly on the question of individualism and secondly on the question of what is meant by "Methodism". In earlier chapters, Wesley's concern for strengthening the communalism of the church has already been noted. All of the prudential means of grace were designed to provide

discipline and fellowship. Furthermore the use of the term "Methodism" to cover a range of related Methodist organizations, sects or denominations may lead to oversimplifications. Whereas Wesleyanism was a collection of religious societies, Primitive Methodists, Bible Christians, Tent Methodists, Welsh Calvinistic Methodists and Leeds Protestant Methodists approximate far more clearly Wilson's concept of the conversionist sect. The Wesleyans may never have been sectarian, but it is equally difficult to describe Primitive Methodism as a denomination from the beginning.

It may be that in order to appreciate the origins of Methodism and the smaller schismatic Methodist groups, it will be necessary to look outside the traditional Church-sect typology and its more recent formulations. However, before coming directly to this possibility, it is useful to examine other criticisms of the typology which lead up to a consideration of alternative constructs.

Among the many criticisms of the Church-sect typology, Demerath and Hammond raise the issue that the typology is over-used and stale:

the framework is too singularly religious in character, thus cutting off analyses of religious groups from insights to be had from analyses of other forms of organization. It is certainly true that sociologists of religion have tended to study churches in their own terms. (15)

It is not a serious criticism of the typology to say that it is

"too singularly religious", since this is simply a declaration of the value-position of Demerath and Hammond. Indeed, one might argue that there is a positive value in analyzing the "churches in their own terms." It is certainly true, however, that few alternatives to the traditional typology have been utilized with the consequence that the sociological understanding of the Church lacks fresh theoretical insight.

Any worthwhile critique of the Church-sect typology must be prepared to put forward alternative typologies. The alternative which was put forward by Demerath and Hammond consisted of an application of Parsons' theory of social systems, specifically the so-called A-G-I-L model of system problems¹⁶. It is hardly appropriate or relevant to disturb once more the muddied waters which engulf Parsonian sociology. Demerath and Hammond themselves took the same position:

Surely the debate over Parsons is likely to rage on, and this is not the place for another volley for or against. (17)

In their case, however, it seems unwise to accept a framework in toto where there is considerable doubt over the value of such a framework. In my case, an important criticism of Parsons provides the basis for useful propositions relating to both schismatic sects and to the problems of ecumenism.

Autonomy and Reciprocity in Religious Organizations

In his article, "Organizational Analysis", Gouldner argued that two main traditions have contributed to the present position of the sociology of organizations¹⁸. The rational model, stemming from Weber's analysis of bureaucracy and rationality, treats an organization

as an "instrument" - that is, as a rationally conceived means to the realization of expressly announced group goals. Its structures are understood as tools deliberately established for the efficient realization of these group purposes. (19)

The other tradition, the "natural system" model, derives from Comte and has been developed by Michels, Selznick and Parsons. In this tradition, the organization's

component structures are seen as emergent institutions, which can be understood only in relation to the diverse needs of the total system. The organization, according to this model, strives to survive and to maintain its equilibrium, and this striving may persist even after its explicit held goals have been successfully attained.....Organizational structures are viewed as spontaneously and homostatically maintained. (20)

Both traditions have mirror-image strengths and inadequacies.

X Rational-models commend themselves simply because they focus

attention on some of the very patterns which distinguish the modern organization, particularly its rationality. (21)

In giving this emphasis to rationality, the rational model frequently neglects the importance of informal, spontaneous groups which emerge in rational organizations. It is precisely to such informal structures that the natural system draws attention, but, at the same time, this approach under-emphasizes the centrality of rational control and organization. By synthesizing both approaches to organizations, Gouldner argued that an adequate theory of organizations could be developed.

While Gouldner's main concern in that particular article was to explore aspects of organizational analysis, he made a significant criticism of the functionalist concept of "system" as applied to organizations. It is this criticism of "system" - which relied on arguments of an earlier paper on "Reciprocity and Autonomy in Functional Theory" - which becomes important for understanding some aspects of sect development²².

Gouldner drew attention to a damaging theoretical weakness in the natural system tradition, namely its failure to examine certain implicit assumptions about the nature of systems:

This has to do with its emphasis on the interdependence of the parts within an organization. (In speaking of an organization's "parts", I refer both to its group structure or roles and to the socialized individuals who are its members.) The natural-system model tends to focus on the organization as a whole, to take the "interdependence" of the parts as given, and therefore fails to explore system-

atically the significance of variations in the degree of interdependence. (23)

At a higher theoretical level, Gouldner's basic argument was that all the assumptions - particularly those of equilibrium and boundary maintenance - which have been associated with systems as wholes, apply with equal force to parts of systems. Just as a system may attempt to survive in opposition to other social systems, so parts of a system may attempt to preserve their autonomy against intrusion from the system itself. Gouldner argued that it is crucial to take the interdependence of parts of a system as problematic since

it focuses attention on interchanges where functional reciprocity may not be symmetrical, and thus directs analysis to tension-producing relationships. (24)

Conflicts over centralization and decentralization are typical of such asymmetric relations.

When parts of a social system are threatened by the loss of autonomy, resulting from centralized encroachments, parts develop strategies to preserve their independence. Gouldner outlines three possible strategies which could serve to counter-act such threats. The first is schism: the part withdraws and becomes a system in its own right. Alternatively, it may attempt to create alliances with other threatened parts, thereby increasing its resources. Finally, groups or individuals may seek to reconstitute the entire social system so as to curb the power of the centre and to satisfy their

needs within a new social and organizational context.

While Gouldner's analysis of organizational conflicts and the three strategies of schism, alliance and rebellion may be relevant to a wide range of sectarian phenomena, the analysis is particularly relevant to an understanding of Methodism.²⁵

When Wesley died in 1791, he left behind him an unresolved organizational conflict between two radically different church polities. The two polities have been labelled High and Low Methodism²⁶. High Methodism involved a high degree of centralized control and depended upon strong commitment to connexional authority. In this polity, Methodist societies were controlled from the top by Wesley and later by the Legal Hundred. The communication of authority was through Districts and Circuits. In the first instance, the connexional system was held together by itinerant preachers who received authority directly from Wesley. On the other hand, Low Methodism gave considerable emphasis to local, lay elements in church life. At congregational level, Methodist societies were divided into classes which were run by laymen. In the day-to-day organization of the chapel and the class system, laymen ruled over laymen. Much of the preaching was done by the local preachers and lay Trustees had financial control over the chapel. These organizational features were paralleled by different theological views of church and ministry. High Methodism

developed a high doctrine of ministry and sacraments, whereas in Low Methodism the doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers" legitimated lay celebration of the Communion. In the Low Methodist tradition, ministers were simply representatives of the local chapel. The dilemma of coping with the conflicts between connexionalism and congregationalism helps to account for the numerous schisms in nineteenth century Methodism and throws light on the traditional discussion of Methodism in terms of the Church-sect typology.

X The common theme behind the Methodist offshoots and more especially behind the secessions was that laymen had the right to control their own chapels independent of interference from Conference. In the case of the Bible Christians and Primitive Methodists, Conference was seen to be either incapable of fostering revivalism or indifferent to the needs of congregations in outlying areas. Since Conference became associated with control from London, the demand for local autonomy became almost a regional conflict with dissent developing on the social and geographical periphery of the Connexion. Rebellion took on the form of a conflict between Mow Cop, Leeds, Manchester, Redruth versus London. In fact, the organizational cracks from a basic fissure between congregationalism and connexionalism ran in many directions: X ministry against laity, chapel against connexion, circuit against district, democracy against authoritarianism, radicalism against toryism. This central dilemma of Methodist organization has been fully

documented by the historians and there is no need to elaborate on this traditional issue²⁷.

The distinction between High and Low Methodism parallels the attributes which have been associated with Church and sect types. Sociologists and historians who refer to the Church-type traits in Methodism or its Anglican background or indeed the religious order attributes of Methodism, are in fact pointing to High Methodist principles. The sectarianism of Methodism was more closely associated with Low Methodist doctrine and organization. While the two typologies - Church-sect and High-Low Methodism - have obvious points in common, they differ in one important respect. The Church-sect typology X tends to treat the types as polar cases and examines the development of sects into churches. This bifurcation, however, is frequently too rigid and has obscured the important continuation of types within religious organizations. In the case of Methodism, it is historically more meaningful to treat Church and sect, High and Low polities as continuous aspects of Methodism. High and Low traditions are heritages to which dissentient groups can appeal as providing models for religious organization. The notions of reciprocity and autonomy focus attention on organizational conflicts, on the continuity of such conflicts and on the persistent emergence of dissent within religious organizations. The image involved in such an approach is not a one-way process from sect to Church but a pendulum between the two types. As a result, it is no longer surprising to find sects within churches or church

attributes in sect-type organizations: it is now to be expected²⁸.

If a pendulum is a useful image of this situation, then one might argue that the pendulum is kept in motion by the pull and thrust of autonomy and reciprocity. In modern Methodism, the pendulum has been activated by ecumenism.

Autonomy and Ecumenism

In modern, differentiated societies, the Church no longer occupies a privileged, monopolistic position. Since many areas of life which were traditionally occupied and directed by religious organizations are now the domain of state and secular organizations, the Church is forced to compete for a position in the social structure. Furthermore, to speak sociologically about "the Church" is a fiction. With the dissolution of a unified Christendom, the Church itself is differentiated into a maze of related, but separate traditions and organizations. A concomitant process is the increasing specialization of roles and organizations around special functions and needs. Religious organizations have found themselves forced out of the primary sectors of the economic and political organization into secondary sectors of family and school. At the level of consciousness, religion has been privatized. Because religious definitions of reality no longer bind together the whole of society, belief has become a matter of "preference" and further these preferences are threatened by implausibility simply because they are no longer widely

supported in society²⁹. At the level of social structure, secularization has been defined as a process whereby religious organization lose social significance³⁰.

Very few social institutions will accept social marginality, even when physically enforced. If one is permitted anthropomorphic language, organizations rarely lie back and die. Bryan Wilson has interpreted ecumenism as the major response of religious organizations to the problem of social marginality. However, although ecumenism may be a major organizational response to secularization, Wilson argues that it is unlikely to be an adequate response.

In Wilson's analysis the external problem facing the churches is marginality; the internal problem is the inroad into religious commitment which is brought about by inherited generations³¹. Whereas conversionist sect recruit new members by evangelism, denominations rely more heavily on the training of the offspring of their existing membership. Of the many changes which such inherited generations introduce into their denomination, one important effect takes place in the orientation to the wider society:

The ideology of the movement may itself be still fervently anti-establishment, but since the movement is likely to evolve an establishment of its own, and since its second and subsequent generation of converts are themselves not those who have had to forge (and sometimes fight for) their beliefs and their organization, we can expect - and indeed we see - that denominations tend to lose something of their pristine vigour; their expression of protest becomes attenuated, even by circumstances of these purely internal considerations. (32)

When faced by external marginality, declining membership and attenuated commitment within the organization, denominations turn to ecumenism as a means of rationalizing resources³³.

An important obstacle to an ecumenical solution is, however, found in ideological compromise. Despite the fact that denominations adhere to a pragmatic view of church order, all religious organizations normally claim that they have some special or divine commission in society. Unlike the raison d'etre of secular organizations, religious organizations view their commission as having a revelational or inspired quality. For this reason, the principles underlying religious communities are not entirely ad hoc and pragmatic. The problem of religious amalgamation, consequently, is that it entails some compromise of existing principles. The crucial issue of ecumenism for the churches centres on the redefinition of traditional principles of belief and organization. Against the background of these dilemmas, Wilson put forward his main hypothesis

that organizations amalgamate when they are weak rather than when they are strong, since alliance means compromise and amendment of commitment.(34)

Wilson located opposition to compromise in lay-ministerial relations and in the notion of "institutional persistence"³⁵.

While the ministries of the major denominations have, to some

extent, shared a common experience of professionalization, they do not necessarily share a common social status. Ecumenism offers an opportunity for ministers with lower social status to equalize their social standing with that of higher status ministries:

X For those professionals in denominations which began in protest gestures of ecumenicalism from larger Churches are obviously attractive because they reduce the immediate sense of inferiority, and offer ultimate prospect of equality with professionals in more "orthodox" Churches. (36)

For the majority of the laity, ecumenism offers no such promotion and the

laity, who have less vested interest in this level of operation of their religious denomination, have shown themselves less enthusiastic about it. (37)

A second source of opposition to amalgamation could derive from institutional persistence. Despite the process of denomination-ization, religious organizations exhibit an important degree of durability:

There is a general social phenomenon of institutional persistence, which is perhaps especially evident in the case of religious institutions, which, possibly because they are ultimate repositories of strong emotional commitment, however latent and traditional that commitment has become, manifest an especial durability. (38)

While at a national level denominations may have been weakened by

social differentiation, it is often the case that at local levels the chapel is heavily embedded in the community. For the church member, the chapel has frequently held an important place in his personal biography of birth, marriage and death. Bricks and mortar become invested with strong emotional ties which make merger at a local level highly problematic.

While Wilson recognized the problems of ecumenism, his main analysis of church amalgamation tended to underemphasise the difficulties which arise from internal opposition to unity. His account was largely concerned with inter-organizational rather than intra-organizational compromise. The ecumenical compromise of traditional principles involves both bargains between churches and negotiations within the churches. One consequence of attempted amalgamation is the growth of dissent and the emergence of strong counter-ecumenical groups in the Anglican-Methodist Conversations that eventually frustrated the union of the two churches. The emergence of such groups may be adequately accounted for in terms of autonomy and reciprocity of parts of an organization.

During the period in which the Anglican-Methodist negotiations took place, three major anti-union organizations emerged in Methodism. These were the Voice of Methodism, the Methodist Revival Fellowship and the National Liaison Committee. The major Methodist supporter of union was the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship which had connections

with two inter-denominational groups, namely Towards Anglican-Methodist Unity and the People Next Door movement³⁹. Dissident organizations saw in ecumenism a threat of centralization and bureaucratization which would jeopardize the principles of Low Methodism. Such groups thought that the sacramental and clerical implications of unity were inconsistent with the Deed of Union of 1932 which became defined as a bastion of local autonomy and lay involvement. It was in order to prevent these consequences of union that dissenters formed alliances to strengthen their position, threatened to withdraw from Methodism and sought to reconstitute Methodism in strict accordance with Low Methodist ideals.

The position of pro-unionists was very different. In the case of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship, unionists looked back on the 1932 Union as a potential threat to High Methodism, especially the sacramentalist emphasis in Methodist worship. Such Methodists as an amalgam which would water down the clerical, connexional and liturgical facets of Methodist tradition. The MSF worked to preserve High Methodism within the united church and to create sympathy for an eventual re-union with the Church of England. As a result, the Anglican-Methodist Conversations were almost entirely consistent with their adherence to High Methodism.

Whether or not union with the Church of England would have

produced schisms from Methodism is debatable. It is clear, however, that the dissentient struggle to preserve autonomy produced emergent sects within Methodism. The dissentient organizations resembled the fundamentalist-conversionist sects which broke away from Methodism in the nineteenth century over the problems of local autonomy⁴⁰. The movement towards schism was terminated permanently or temporarily by the failure of the ecumenical negotiations. If the dissenters closely resemble emergent sects, the MSF is self-consciously an "order" within contemporary Methodism. Like Wesley's early societies in the Established Church, the MSF encourages its members to follow a disciplined sacramental and devotional life. Whereas the dissenters look back to the Deed of Union and the Reformation for inspiration and legitimation, the MSF members take as their point of reference the Catholic and Primitive Church components of Wesleyan theology. In recent Methodist history, the attempt to unite the Anglican and Methodist churches has resulted in a sharp definition between High and Low Methodism. Furthermore, inter-organizational merger produced intra-organizational conflict over the threat to local and lay autonomy and in the late sixties there was a distinct possibility that dissentient groups would have withdrawn from the parent Methodist Church.

Conclusion

For over a decade considerable criticism has been aimed at the

Church-sect typology. It has been frequently argued that the use of the typology has often blocked the development of alternative models and insights. The concepts of organizational autonomy and reciprocity could be used to account for the emergence of sect groups within churches and for sectarian schism. Sects reject and rebel against church centralism and bureaucracy which threaten congregational autonomy and come between the believer and God⁴¹. Many sect movements may be seen as attempts to decentralize religion, but in so far as sects need to create their own federations and national organizations they once more set in motion the conflict centralization and decentralization.

Whatever the inadequacies of the Church-sect typology it would be tantamount to theoretical suicide to abandon completely the typology. Of course, it would be impossible to throw out the typology even if such a strategy were desirable. The typology has, among other things, enabled a mass of data to be collected and categorized; it has embodied a dynamic theory of religious change from Church to sect; finally, the typology has served to focus sociological analysis on key aspects of religious commitment and organization. For these reasons, the use of the concept of autonomy is complementary with, rather than an alternative of, the Church-sect typology. Gouldner's theory of organizational relations is an addition to and, in part, a

reformulation of the traditional typology. If the threat to autonomy is a key development in the emergence of sectarianism, the traditional typology is particularly useful in analyzing the process by which sects may develop back into churches. The place of inherited membership in this process is of particular interest.

Chapter 7References

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- (3) The chapter, therefore, forms the theoretical background for chapters 8, 9 and 10.
- (4) For a compact discussion of various interpretations of the ideal type, cf. Don Martindale "Sociological Theory and the Ideal Type" in L. Gross (ed.) Symposium on Sociological Theory, New York: Harper and Row, 1959, pp. 57-91.
- (5) Cf. H. Richard Niebuhr The Social Sources of Denominationalism, New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1957; H. Becker Systematic Sociology, New York: Wiley, 1932; T. O'Dea "Mormonism and the Avoidance of Sectarian Stagnation: A Study of Church, Sect and Incipient Nationality", American Journal of Sociology, 60, November, 1954, pp. 285-293; B. Wilson "An Analysis of Sect Development", American Journal of Sociological Review, 24th February, 1959, pp. 3-15; D.A. Martin "The Denomination" British Journal of Sociology, Vol.13, March, 1962, pp.1-14; E. Goode, N.J. Demerath and A.W. Eister in Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Spring, 1967.
- (6) J.H. Chamberlayne "From Sect to Church in British Methodism", British Journal of Sociology, Vol.15, No.2, 1964, p.143.
- (7) *ibid.*, p.147.
- (8) Earl D.C. Brewer "Sect and Church in Methodism", Social Forces, 30, 1952, p.405.
- (9) Chamberlayne, *op.cit.*, p.147.

- (10) E. Troeltsch The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches (trans. O. Wyon), London: George and Allen Unwin, 1931, Vol.2, p.723.
- (11) R. Kissack, Church or No Church, London: Epworth Press, 1964, p.83.
- (12) Martin, op.cit., p.3.
- (13) Quoted in J. Kent The Age of Disunity, London: Epworth Press, 1966, pp.172-3.
- (14) *ibid.*, p.176.
- (15) Demerath and Hammond, op.cit., p.162. I am not taking up the issue that their typology is culturally and historically specific to societies which are or have been heavily influenced by Christian ideas and movements. The criticism of cultural limitations is simply irrelevant since I am specifically concerned with Methodism. On historical relativism, it is interesting to note that Troeltsch himself thought his typology was inapplicable in the modern period:

I have carried my Social Teachings only to the eighteenth century and this for a good reason. From that time on, European Civilization can no longer be called Christian.

(A. Dietrich Biographisches Jahrbuch, 1923, Berlin, 1930, p.355, quoted in W. Pauck Harnack and Troeltsch, Two Historical Theologians, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968, pp.80-1.)

Certainly, a powerful argument can be put forward for restricting the use of the term "Church" to societies in which religion has a form of monopoly. Following Niebuhr and Martin, it would make more sociological sense to use the term "denomination" in differentiated societies.

- (16) Other alternatives have been developed by P.M. Harrison Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition: A Social Case Study of the American Baptist Convention, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959 and by P.L. Berger "A Market Model for the Analysis of Ecumenicity", Social Research, Spring, 1963, pp.77 ff.

- (17) Demerath and Hammond, op.cit., pp.163-4.
- x (18) A.W. Gouldner "Organizational Analysis" in R. Merton (et al.) Sociology Today, New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1965, pp.400-428.
- (19) *ibid.*, p.404.
- (20) *ibid.*, p.405.
- (21) *ibid.*, p.406.
- (22) A.W. Gouldner "Reciprocity and Autonomy in Functional Theory" in Gross, op.cit., pp.241-270.
- (23) Gouldner, op.cit., p.419.
- (24) Gouldner, op.cit., p.254.
- (25) The interpretation of sectarianism as a protest against bureaucratic centralism seems especially pertinent to the emergence of Baptist protest movements in modern Russia. For a discussion of the Baptist protest against both the Soviet State and the state supported ecumenical bodies, cf. M. Bourdeaux Religious Ferment in Russia, London: Macmillan, 1968.
- (26) This discussion of High and Low Methodism is taken in part from Kent, op.cit., Ch.2.
- (27) *ibid.* Cf. in addition R. Currie Methodism Divided: A Study in the Sociology of Ecumenicalism, London: Faber and Faber, 1968 and T. Shaw A History of Cornish Methodism, Truro: D. Bradford Barton, 1967.
- (28) The fact that sects can be located within churches and denominations has been alluded to by R. Stark "Social Contexts and Religious Experience", Review of Religious Research, Vol.7, No.1, Fall, 1965, p.24 and by N.J. Demerath 111 Social Class in American Protestantism, Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965, Ch.111.
- x (29) For a discussion of secularization in these terms, cf. P.L. Berger The Social Reality of Religion, London: Faber and Faber, 1969 and T. Luckmann The Invisible Religion: the Transformation of Symbols in Industrial Society, London: Macmillan, 1967.

- X (30) B. Wilson in Religion in Secular Society: a Sociological Comment, London: Watts, 1966, defines secularization as
 the process whereby religious thinking,
 practice and institutions lose social
 significance. (P.xiv).

I am not so much interested in Wilson's analysis of the causes of ecumenism as with what ecumenism entails.

- (31) While Wilson criticized the assumption that the sect can only exist for one generation in his article "An Analysis of Sect Development", op.cit., Wilson adheres to a modified version of the traditional generational argument. To some extent, one could say that for Wilson the consequences of inherited generations are fundamental to sect development but they may be delayed by such factors as the strictness of admission to the sect.
- X (32) Wilson, pp.127-8.
- (33) In terms of recruitment policy, Currie interprets ecumenism as a shift from frontal growth by the normal means of evangelism to lateral growth by organizational merger. Cf. Currie, op.cit., p.86.
- (34) Wilson, op.cit., p.126.
- (35) For an application of Wilson's notion of "institutional persistence" to the problems of ecumenism, Cf. B. Turner "Institutional Persistence and Ecumenicalism in Northern Methodism" in D. Martin (ed.) A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain, 2, London: SCM, 1969, pp.47-57.
- (36) Wilson, op.cit., p.130.
- (37) *ibid.*
- X (38) *ibid.*, p.29
- (39) These splinter groups will be discussed in detail in chapter 9.
- (40) This argument has been put forward in B. Turner "Discord in Modern Methodism", Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, 1970 (forthcoming).

- X (41) Although the argument in this chapter has started with a social system perspective on intra-organizational conflict, bureaucracy and centralism, the conclusions of the analysis are parallel to Berger's phenomenological approach in "The Sociological Study of Sectarianism", Social Research, Vol.21, 1954, pp.467-485.

Chapter 8.Recruitment - Socialization and Conversion

Niebuhr noted three factors which were important in the transition from Church to sect: the removal of persecution, economic success and the second generation. Conversion to the sect becomes replaced by socialization in a denomination:

Another important factor in the development of such denominations from revolutionary groups to settled social bodies, content with their place in the scheme of things, is the substitution of a second generation, which holds its convictions as a heritage, for a first generation which had won these convictions painfully and held them at a bitter cost.
(1)

Wilson has argued that the consequences of a second generation may be delayed by adequate protection of the sect by rigid tests of admission and that the consequences are almost wholly peculiar to conversionist sects². Sects based upon Arminian doctrines and upon a strong conversionist commitment are highly susceptible to denomination-ization. The discussion of the second and subsequent generations in sects has normally centred on the subtle change of orientations to society which such inherited memberships introduce into the sect. In this chapter, attention is focused on membership growth and decline as seen through the perspective of conversion and inheritance.

The assertion that sects rely on a "converted rather than an inherited membership" points to differences in emphasis between sects and churches rather than to hard and fast distinctions³. For example

there was no one point in time when Methodism switched from reliance on conversion to training the children of earlier converts. Both types of recruitment were continuously used from the beginning. While early Methodist societies contained a high proportion of converted members, the need to train children into the movement was paramount. By 1795, the educational zeal of the Methodists had become "notorious":

Respecting the education of their children, it is notorious that not any body of Christians has made a greater exertion towards the attainment of so valuable an end than the Methodists: witness their noble seminary at Kingswood, their numerous Charity Schools, in London and elsewhere; exclusive of the frequent instruction which they receive from the Preachers, who meet them in a body by themselves once a week, for the purpose of catechising, etc. (4)

Traditionally, Methodism provided a wide range of means for training children into Methodism and for the training of existing members. The means of socialization included schools for elementary instruction, production of Wesley's Christian Library for the preachers, Sunday schools and various forms of lay groups, such as band and class meetings. The Methodist family was of singular importance in the socialization of new members. Without the backing of a powerful Christian family tradition, Wesley thought that any religious revival would "in a short time die away".

While conversionist sects or evangelical movements in general may

rely on the support which comes from the adequate training of adherents and inherited generations, exclusive reliance on socialization has, in the long run, serious implications for religious organizations. As Niebuhr observed, commitment becomes attenuated and original standards of practice and belief are not supported. Religious movements which see themselves as essentially evangelical are particularly embarrassed by the over-dependence on inherited membership. It has been said of Methodism that it

owes not merely its existence, but its characteristic theology and institutions, to a revival of religion. It depends absolutely upon the maintenance of the original standard of devotion and experience, not merely for its wellbeing, but even for its integrity. (5)

In addition to declining standards, over-reliance on inheritance and training has important implications for membership decline. Whereas in the decades of Methodist growth, conversion and socialization were equally employed means of recruitment, in contemporary Methodism, the maintenance of membership depends more and more on family training⁶.

Methodist Membership 1956-67⁷

Unlike the measurement of religious belief and experience, the decline of Methodist membership presents few methodological problems. Although membership lists are inflated, the diminution of membership is still a comparatively reliable indicator of organizational failure⁸.

The organizational decline of Methodism may be said to be clear-cut: between December 1956 and December 1967, connexional membership fell from 742,440 to 666,713 which represents a reduction of over seventy-five thousand members (Table 8:1). In the Leeds District, membership was reduced by just under four thousand.

Membership decline in terms of gross reduction is, however, a crude measure of the problems of an organization. A more sensitive measure of organizational decline is given by the percentage of Methodists in the national population. It is quite obvious that growth is not synonymous with success since an increasing organizational membership may in fact be failing to keep pace with the growth of population in society. In terms of a percentage of the population in all age groups, Methodists declined from 1.67% in 1941, 1.53% in 1951 to 1.42% in 1961 (Table 8:2) A more accurate percentage can be calculated on the basis of the adult population, since reception into Methodism is normally after fifteen years of age. On this criterion, Methodists form just under two percent of the adult population with a slight reduction between 1951 and 1961⁹.

When gains to and losses from Methodist membership are examined, the contemporary decline of membership is to be accounted for primarily in terms of Methodism's inability to recruit new members. Before substantiating this claim, marginal aspects of growth and decline are

examined first.

There has been some loss of membership through emigration in the sixties, which has not been offset by immigration. Prior to 1963 the numbers received from other countries were not reported in the Minutes of Conference. Since 1963, both immigration and emigration have been increasing and the imbalance between them has amounted to a loss of seven hundred members per annum (Table 8:3). The leakage of membership through emigration is, however, an insignificant detail in the total picture of declining membership.

A similar imbalance is found when movements from and to other denominations are considered. Between 1956 and 1967, Methodism had a net loss of over six thousand members to other denominations, while the figure for Leeds was one hundred and ninety-seven. Again, these losses cannot be considered critical and furthermore there was only a slight upward trend of removals to other denominations during this period (Table 8:4). Clearly the important features of numerical decline must lie elsewhere¹⁰.

Substantial losses from the Methodist Church result from the failure to retain members. For example, over twelve thousand members appear in the "ceased to meet" column of the Methodist Minutes per year (Table 8:5). While theoretically "ceased to meet" is an interesting indication of a church's inability to satisfy the needs of its members, it is a difficult category of membership loss to interpret. It offers

no diagnosis of the reasons why Methodists cease to be members and furthermore one has no estimate of how long the delay is before members are removed from membership lists.

A slightly higher magnitude of loss results from deaths. In the period between 1956 and 1967 there was an average of over thirteen thousand deaths every year (Table 8:6). If "ceased to meet" gives some indication of the organization's inability to retain members, then the number of deaths indicates an aging denomination. In any one year, Methodism can expect to lose twenty-five thousand members through voluntary abstention or death. There is, however, no trend for either of these categories to increase.

While losses through deaths, transfers to other denominations and abstentions from membership have remained relatively stable over time, the number of new members per annum has declined sharply. Apart from minor recoveries in 1958 and 1962, the trend is uniformly downwards. The Connexion received nearly twenty-six thousand new members in 1956, but this figure had dropped by over ten thousand in 1967 (Table 8:7). The same pattern of decline was observable in the Leeds District.

X Comparing losses from gains to the Methodist Church has demonstrated that deaths and "ceased to meet" do constitute important inroads into denominational strength. Gains from other countries and denominations are small and do not counteract the losses to other denominations

and countries. However, over the period under consideration, these aspects of membership have remained fairly stable, but the number of new members does show a marked decline (Graphs 1 and 2). This relationship is true at both connexional and district levels. When the categories of losses and gains which determine membership strength are analyzed, decline is related not to deaths, migration, transfer of membership or "ceased to meet", but primarily to the failure to recruit new members. An examination of data from district level may throw some light on the two processes of recruitment of new members.

Conversion

The term "conversion" will be used in a restricted sense. Conversion experiences were examined in chapter six. The focus of the term in this chapter is on the source of Methodist membership and on the reasons which are given for membership. A person whose parents were not Methodists or who belonged at one time to a different denomination and who is at present a member of the Methodist Church, will be termed, a "convert to Methodism". Quite clearly this is a crude, operational definition of conversion, but it will prove adequate for the purpose at hand. The opposite to the convert is the person who inherited his membership through socialization in a Methodist family.

Conversion from other denominations is, in fact, a marginal feature of recruitment to Methodism. In any one year, recruitment from

other denominations is less than three thousand persons. Data from the survey of Methodism in Leeds supported the view that denominational changes are insignificant. Over three quarters of the respondents had not belonged to another denomination at any time.

As the emphasis on the importance of conversion to the Church recedes, socialization comes into the foreground as the main route to membership. A clear indication of these changes in Methodism was offered by the reasons which were given in the survey for church membership. When asked for their "main reasons for belonging to Methodism", fifty-one percent said that they "were brought up in it" and twenty-three percent said "I prefer Methodist worship" (Table 8:8). Only five percent claimed that their main reason was that they had been converted. In terms of the actor's definition, nothing could be more clearly evidence of the shift from conversion to inherited membership. As a concomitant of this changing orientation, it was hardly surprising that Methodist laity infrequently attempted to convert others. When respondents were asked whether they had ever tried to convert someone to their faith, forty-four percent had never tried and only ten percent replied "Yes, often" (Table 8:9).

In contemporary Methodism, a major problem centres on the inability to recruit new members. One implication of the Leeds' data was that the majority of new members are, in fact, recruited from the descendants

of existing church members. In addition to a failure to convert, there is a failure to socialize.

Socialization

If conversion implies some sudden change in commitment, socialization implies some more or less continuous process of training by which norms and values are acquired and enforced. Preparation for the Service of Public Reception takes place within a formal and informal setting. The primary formal means of socialization is the Sunday School; the primary informal, the family.

It was found that subjectively Methodist members perceived that family background played a significant part in preparing them for membership. The powerful role of the family in religious identification was also apparent from the denominational affiliation of parents of present members. During the time existing members were growing up, sixty-eight percent had mother and sixty percent had fathers who were Methodists (Table 8:10). Only five percent had fathers and four percent had mothers who had no affiliation with organized religion. The influence of Methodist parenthood is further strengthened in later marriage. It was found that sixty-eight percent had spouses who had been raised in the Methodist Church and eighty-six percent had spouses who were members of the Methodist Church at the time of the survey (Table 8:1). Similarly while eighteen percent had spouses who had

been brought up as Anglicans, only nine percent had spouses who were currently members of the Anglican Church. There is not only a strong tradition of Methodist parental background, but also a tendency towards denominational homogeneity within marriage.

It is unfortunately impossible to go much further than simply pointing to the fact that the majority of Methodists had Methodist parents, have Methodist spouses and recognize that their current membership very largely depends on being brought up in the church. The data do not reveal how many children failed to become Methodists or how many of the present generation will enter into membership. In short, the data suggest that family background is important, but not how important. One thing that can be noted is that, although sixty-six percent were married, the majority had achieved an age when reproduction was increasingly improbable. For example, sixty-six percent were over the age of forty years and only twenty-seven percent were between the ages of twenty-one and forty years (Table 8:12). Because some children must fail to become Methodists, it would appear that inherited membership has become a rather narrow base of recruitment. Literally and metaphorically, Methodism requires new blood to improve its recruitment of new members.

The family is a major means for religious socialization but it is necessary also to examine supportive agencies of child training. Whether or not the

Sunday school is the universal cradle
which leads to full membership,(11)

there can be no doubt that traditionally the Sunday School was designed as such. With the development of universal, secular education, the monopoly of the churches over education was borken. In particular, parents no longer need resort to the churches for the instruction of their children. While Sunday School may have become a convenient place for depositing children on Sundays, the number of children in these schools has declined absolutely and proportionately.

In the Methodist connexion, for example, the number of scholars on the membership roll dropped from 742,592 in 1956 to 476,436 in 1966 and in the Leeds' District from 25,184 to 15,861 (Table 8:13). In fact, the number of scholars who receive training is less than the number on the roll. Scholars in attendance represented about three-quarters of those who were on the membership records (Table 8:14). Apart from this minor correction, a more dangerous statistic, from the church's point of view, is the decline of Sunday school scholars relative to the population of children under fourteen years of age. Pickering estimated that in 1901 the Methodist Sunday School membership was a quarter of the child population between five and fourteen years, but by 1951 the membership was only twelve percent of this age group¹². In more recent years, there has been a further decline from twelve percent in 1951 to seven percent in 1961 (Table 8:15).

Whatever calculations and comparisons are made, that there has been a significant reduction in the number of Sunday School children is a fact of some considerable importance for the socialization of inherited membership. In order to produce a detailed analysis of the connection between Sunday school training and reception into full membership, it would be necessary to obtain information on the success of the schools in achieving the goal of full membership for different historical periods. In the absence of such an enquiry, existing evidence would indicate that

without some youthful socialization into religious norms and practices church-going is not likely at any point in the adult life cycle. (13)

The decline of the Sunday school represents a continuous erosion of an important channel of socialization and consequently threatens the church's ability to recruit from inherited generations within the church and from outside.

The major institution of adult socialization in Methodism was the class meeting. The class system was traditionally multipurpose in that it provided a devotional meeting which was half-way between public and private devotion. It was also a means of exercising mutual oversight at a local level. The class was an institution by which those who had been converted superficially or who deviated from Methodist standards could be weeded out of the societies. The decline

of the Methodist class system was examined under the discussion of "prudential means" in chapter five and there is no need to repeat this discussion. However, it is worthwhile noting that the class meeting is now rarely capable of fulfilling its traditional functions because it has been replaced by a ticket system¹⁴. An indication that classes no longer meet is provided by a reductio ad absurdum of the connexional statistics. To be a member of the Methodist Church, is to be a ticket-holder. Therefore, by dividing the connexional membership by the number of class leaders, one can find the average size of the class meeting. On the basis of this calculation, the average size of Methodist class in 1966 was one hundred and twenty-three persons and in Leeds it was one hundred and nineteen (Table 8:16). It is clearly impossible that classes of this size actually meet. No other decline could be more indicative of the changing nature of Methodism away from early standards of discipline and commitment than the decline of the class system.

No religious organization bases its recruitment solely on either socialization or conversion. By and large, some contact with the organization through its agencies of socialization will precede conversion and in turn conversion will be followed by a period of training and "screening". However, these two aspects of recruitment are usefully separable in abstract terms and provide a means of examining different emphases in various religious organizations. Whatever the

extent of the disagreement as to whether Methodism was a religious order, denomination or sect, few would disagree that Methodism placed a great emphasis on conversion, field-preaching and the assurance which comes from a personal relation with Christ. The rapid growth of Methodism was supported and contained within the socialization agencies, particularly the Methodist class system and family life.

Inadequate conversion could always be supplemented by training.

During the nineteenth century the emphasis on conversion declined and Methodism came more and more to depend on recruiting members from in-

X herited generations. The Leeds' data suggest that in contemporary Methodism, the great majority owe their membership to family background.

Yet the switch from an emphasis on conversion to one on training new members through the family has meant that the base of new membership has been curtailed. Apart from such demographic factors as low

fertility, small families and an ageing Methodist population, the inadequacies of formal and informal socialization mean that Methodism

is incapable of maintaining its existing membership. With the Sunday school and class system declining in the modern period, the Methodist family does not provide a source for expanding membership. One

solution to membership decline could be found in improved methods of evangelism; another, in improved ecumenical relations.

Chapter 8References

- (1) H. Richard Niebuhr The Social Sources of Denominationalism New York: Meridian Books Inc., 1957, p.54.
- X (2) B. Wilson "An Analysis of Sect Development" American Sociological Review, 24th February, 1959, pp.3-15
- X (3) Glock saw the difference between converted and inherited membership as the main sociological distinction between sect and Church, cf. C.Y. Glock "The Sociology of Religion" in R. Merton (et al.) Sociology Today: Problems and Prospects, New York: Harper and Row, 1965, p.158.
- (4) "A Member of the Church of England" Methodism Vindicated: a Reply to Clapham 1795, quoted in W.J. Warner The Wesleyan Movement in the Industrial Revolution, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930, p.228.
- X (5) J. Scott Lidgett "Fundamental Unity" in W.J. Townsend (et al.) A New History of Methodism, London: Hodder and Toughton, 1909, p.423.
- (6) The chapter is primarily concerned with what might be called the internal problem of membership growth. The external problems of population movement, population growth, the differentiation of society and the nature of secularization are not considered.
- (7) There are a number of reasons for concentrating the analysis into the period from around 1956. Currie has dealt at great length with the period 1801 to 1932 and Dr. Pickering has analyzed the statistics on various aspects of Methodist membership from 1932 to 1961. The problems of membership in the decade after 1957 provide a particularly relevant background for a study of ecumenism in the following chapter. Finally, in this decade, unlike the period between 1932-1950, the disruptions of war and denominational amalgamation were at a minimum.

- (8) The problems of employing membership figures have been partly discussed in chapter three.
- (9) It is not possible to relate the decline of membership in the Leeds' District, or in any other District, to any relevant population since the District boundaries do not correspond to those utilized by the census authorities.
- (10) There is a leakage from circuit transfers, but the loss from these internal changes is small. Also the nature of the loss is difficult to interpret since there is some delay before transferred members are re-registered.
- (11) W.S.F. Pickering "The Present Position of the Anglican and Methodist Churches in the Light of Available Statistics" in W.S.F. Pickering (ed.) Anglican-Methodist Relations, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961, p.12.
- (12) *ibid.*, table VI, p.14.
- X (13) D. Martin A Sociology of English Religion, London: Heinemann 1967, p.41.
- (14) For a discussion of the decline of the class system and the increasing size of class meetings, cf. R. Currie Methodism Divided: a study in the sociology of ecumenicalism, London: Faber and Faber, 1968, Ch.4.

Table 8:1

Membership of the Methodist Church in Great Britain (including garrisons, ministers, probationers and students) and the Leeds District, showing annual decrease.

(1) Year	Connexional Membership	Decrease	Leeds District Membership	Decrease
1956	742,440	1,877	(2)	
X 1957	739,680	2,764	26,527	
X 1958	736,781	2,889	26,337	190
1959	733,658	3,123	26,203	134
1960	728,589	5,069	25,931	272
X 1961	723,529	5,060	25,734	188
X 1962	719,286	4,243	25,407	336
X 1963	710,774	8,512	25,067	331
X 1964	701,306	9,468	24,601	475
1965	690,347	10,959	23,913	688
1966	678,766	11,581	23,237	676
1967	666,713	12,053	22,588	649

Source: Minutes, Agendas.

(1) Membership figures refer to December Visitation in the year indicated.

(2) In 1956, membership of the Leeds District was 22,427. In the following year, five circuits were added to the District, which pushed the 1957 figure up to 26,527. The decrease for the year is not shown.

Table 8:2

Membership of the Methodist Church in Great Britain as a percentage of the population (all ages) and adults in three census years.

Year	Connexional Membership	Population, all ages, in 000's	Membership as % of Population	Population over 15yrs. in 000's	Membership as % of Population
1941	778,712	46,605.0	1.67	(1)	
1951	744,815	48,854.3	1.53	37,907.5	1.97
1961	728,589	51,283.9	1.42	39,360.3	1.85

X Sources: Minutes of Conference, Royal Commission Report on Population.

(1) Figures for population were estimated in 1941 and no estimate was provided for the population over 15 years.

Table 8:3Migration

(1) Year	Methodist Connexion		Balance
	Received from other Countries	Removed to other Countries	
1963	130	774	-644
1964	124	794	-670
1965	123	854	-731
1966	118	879	-761
1967	156	890	-734

(1) Gains from other countries were not shown prior to the 1963 December Visitation.

Table 8:4

Received from and lost to Other
Denominations, showing Net Balance

Year	Connexion			Leeds		
	Losses	Gains	Balance	Losses	Gains	Balance
1956	2,532	2,154	-378	(1)		
1957	2,552	1,972	-580	54	59	+ 5
1958	2,735	2,120	-615	58	55	- 3
1959	2,868	2,139	-729	60	63	+ 3
1960	2,738	2,162	-576	60	62	+ 2
1961	2,957	2,258	-699	68	62	- 6
1962	2,752	2,276	-476	105	63	-42
1963	3,002	2,285	-717	95	59	-46
1964	3,029	2,489	-540	76	45	-31
1965	3,927	2,563	-364	66	53	-13
1966	2,668	2,668	0	84	43	-41
1967	3,092	2,627	-465	90	65	-25

(1) Not reported.

Table 8:5

Members of the Methodist Church
Who "ceased to meet"

Year	Connexion		Leeds District	
	Ceased to Meet	Increase/Decrease	Ceased to Meet	Increase/Decrease
1956	12,088		(1)	
1957	11,232	-856	412	
1958	11,970	+738	447	+ 35
1959	11,824	-146	444	- 3
1960	12,799	+975	513	+ 69
1961	12,232	-567	426	- 87
1962	12,044	-188	473	+ 47
1963	12,344	+300	436	- 37
1964	12,257	- 87	550	+114
1965	12,625	+368	459	- 91
1966	12,740	+115	523	+ 64
1967	12,228	-512	520	- 3

(1) Reorganization of the District in 1956 makes this figure unreliable.

Table 8:6

Losses to Connexional and District
Membership from Deaths

Year	Connexion		District	
	Deaths	Increase/ Decrease	Deaths	Increase/ Decrease
1956.	13,385		(1)	
1957	12,917	- 468	473	
1958	13,376	+ 459	500	+27
1959	13,398	+ 22	454	-46
1960	13,439	+ 41	444	-10
1961	14,021	+ 582	532	+88
1962	14,259	+ 238	521	-11
1963	14,278	+ 19	486	-35
1964	13,175	-1,103	440	-46
1965	13,252	+ 77	486	+46
1966	13,737	+ 485	517	+31
1967	12,809	- 828	436	-81

(1) District figure for deaths was unreliable in 1956.

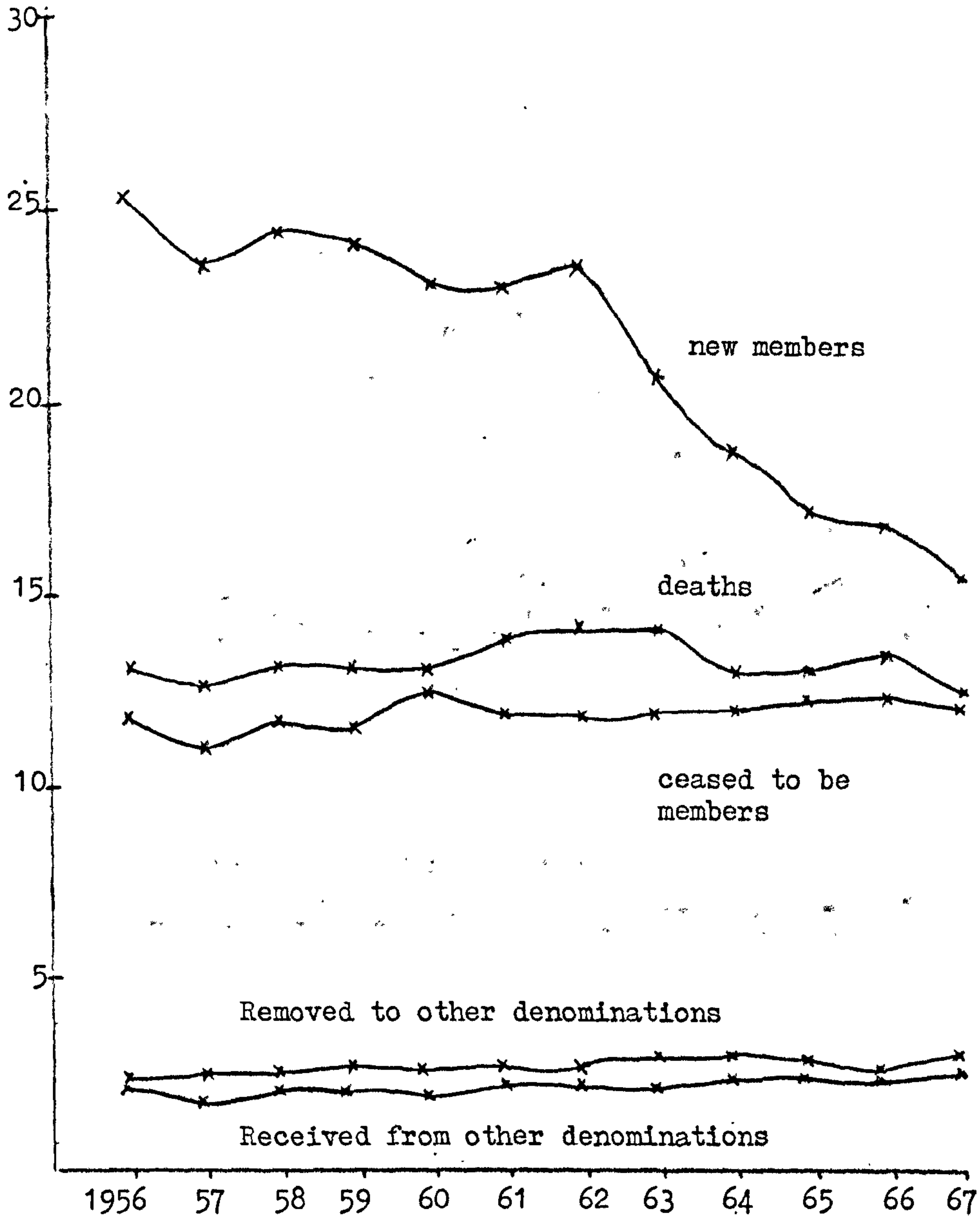
Table 8:7Annual Reception of New Members

Year	Connexion		Leeds	
	New Members	Increase/Decrease	New Members	Increase/Decrease
1956	25,907		(1)	
1957	23,898	-2,009	794	
1958	25,133	+1,233	895	+101
1959	24,675	- 358	853	- 42
1960	23,753	- 914	798	- 55
1961	23,780	+ 27	850	+ 52
1962	24,188	+ 408	874	+ 24
1963	21,322	-2,866	760	- 14
1964	19,212	-2,110	696	- 64
1965	17,654	-1,558	462	-234
1966	17,390	- 264	591	+129
1967	15,898	-1,492	515	- 76

(1) Unreliable figure for 1956.

Graph 1

Deaths, Removed to Other Denominations,
Ceased to be Members, Received from
Other Denominations and New Members in
British Methodism, 1956-67, in 000's.



Graph 2

Deaths, Removed to other Denominations,
Ceased to be Members, Received from
other Denominations and New Members in
the Leeds District, 1957-1967, in 100's.

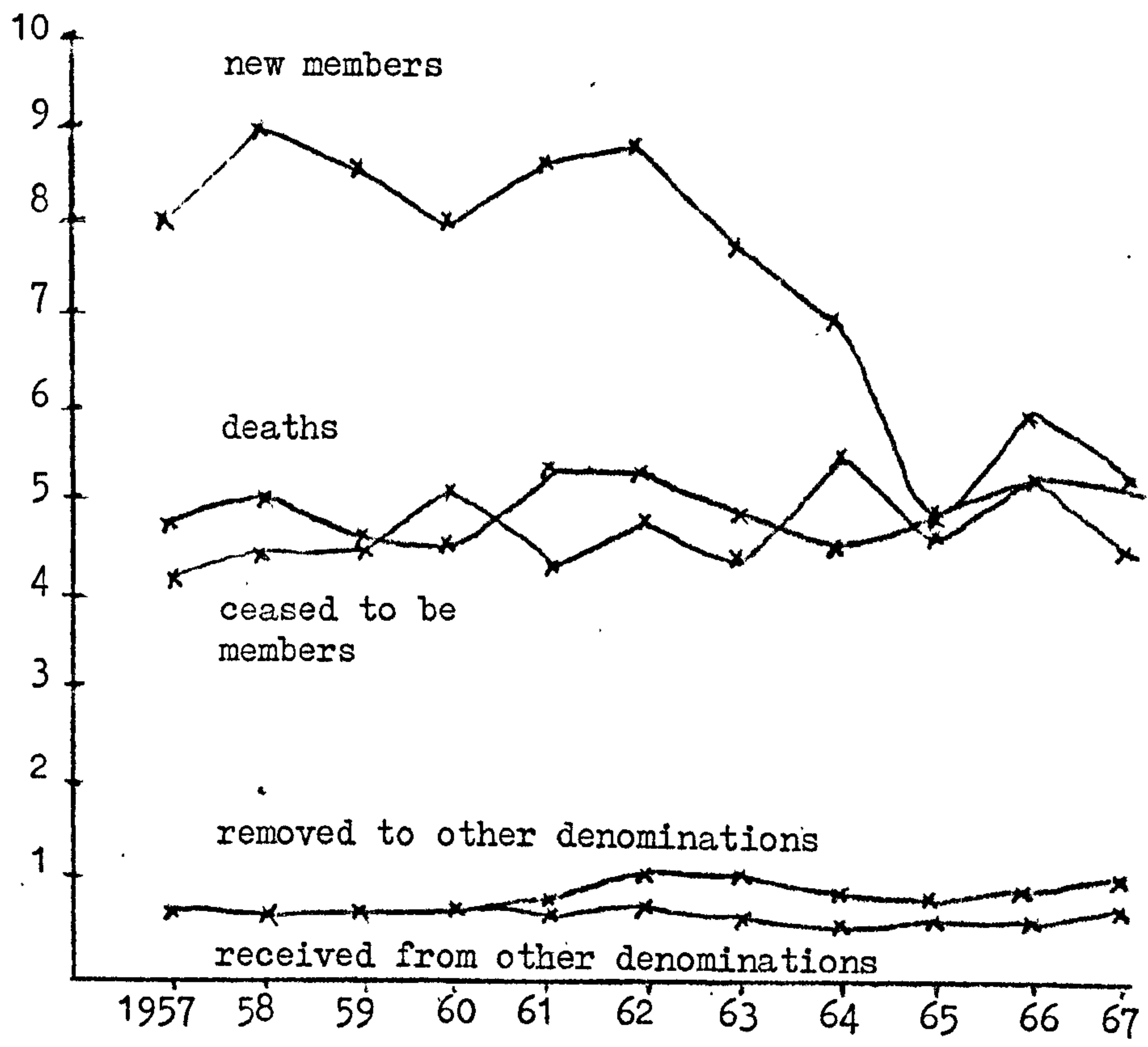


Table 8:8

"What is your main reason
for belonging to Methodism?" (Percentage)

I was brought up in it	51.0
I prefer Methodist worship	22.5
I agree with the principles of the Methodist Church	8.5
I like the friendly atmosphere	3.0
I was converted to it	4.6
Methodism is the true Church	x
My wife/husband and children are Methodists	3.5
No answer	6.4
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

x Less than 1%

Table 8:9

"Have you ever personally tried to convert someone to your religious faith?" (Percentage)

Yes, often	10.4
Yes, a few times	19.4
Yes, once or twice	25.0
No, never	43.6
No answer	1.6
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 8:10

"During the time you were growing up what was the denominational affiliation of your mother and father?" (Percentage)

Denomination	Father	Mother
Methodist	59.7	67.5
Anglican	19.6	17.3
Congregational	1.1	2.4
Presbyterian	2.1	1.6
Sectarian	x	x
Roman Catholic	x	x
Agnostic	x	x
None	5.3	3.9
Other	2.4	x
No answer	7.5	5.2
Total	100.0	100.0
N.	(342)	(342)

x Less than 1%

Table 8:11

"In what denomination was your spouse raised
and to what denomination does your spouse
belong?" (Percentage)

Denomination	Spouse raised in	Spouse belongs to
Methodist	67.6	85.5
Anglican	18.3	8.9
Congregational	3.5	0.0
Baptist	2.7	x
Presbyterian	1.9	x
Roman Catholic	1.0	1.5
None and other	1.0	1.8
No answer	3.0	1.3
Total	100.0	100.0
N.	(342)	(342)

x Less than 1%

Table 8:12Age (Percentage)

- 20 years	5.9
21 - 40 years	27.2
41 - 60 years	28.1
61 - 80 years	35.3
81 - 100 years	2.2
No answer	1.3
Total	100.0
N.	(342)

Table 8:13Sunday School Scholars "On Roll"

Year	Connexion		Leeds	
	Scholars	Decrease	Scholars	Decrease
1956	742,592	27,141	(1)	
1957	699,494	43,098	25,184	
1958	664,560	34,934	24,360	824
1959	629,080	35,480	22,614	1,746
1960	587,276	41,804	21,529	1,085
1961	557,839	29,437	20,378	1,151
1962	529,230	28,609	19,027	1,351
1963	504,839	24,391	17,574	1,453
1964	495,696	9,143	16,978	1,591
1965	482,420	13,292	16,503	475
1966	476,436	5,984	15,861	642

(1) Figure not reported in the Leeds Agenda

Table 8:14

Sunday School Scholars in
"Average Attendance"

Year	Scholars in Attendance	
	Connexion	Leeds
1956	555,076	(1)
1957	522,704	(1)
1958	494,205	17,961
1959	466,142	16,542
1960	431,357	15,561
1961	407,787	14,561
1962	384,991	13,588
1963	369,148	12,694
1964	366,096	12,309

(1) Figures not reported.

Table 8:15

Sunday School Scholars (On Roll) as a
Percentage of the 5 - 14 age group of
the Population of Great Britain

Year	Scholars	Population, 5-14 yrs., both Sexes, in 000's	Scholars as a % of 5-14 yrs. age group.
1951	805,659	6,758.3	11.9
1961	557,839	7,857.3	7.0

Source: Minutes of the Methodist Conference, Royal
Commission on Population.

Table 8:16

Estimated Size of Class Meeting in the
Methodist Connexion and Leeds District

Year	Estimated Class Size	
	Connexion	Leeds
1961	129	138
1963	129	123
1965	122	129
1966	123	119

Chapter 9Ecumenism - Discord in Modern Methodism

It has been frequently claimed that the schisms in nineteenth century Methodism were produced by a fundamental rift between two opposed Methodist constitutions. In High Methodism, emphasis was placed on connexionalism, whereas in Low Methodism authority devolved upon the local chapel. The constitutional rift had its counterpart in doctrinal differences. Alongside the principle of connexional organization, there developed a high doctrine of ministerial authority and sacramentalism. However, in Low Methodism greater weight was given to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the minister came to be viewed as a representative of the local chapel. The discord between these two views of church order resulted in schismatic groups which attempted to establish the salience of Low Methodist doctrines. The Kilhamites and Protestant Methodists were typical of such groups which rejected High Methodism in favour of greater local autonomy.

These examples of dramatic and complete schism from Wesleyan Methodism have tended to obscure the fact that, even within an apparently united Methodism, there is a tendency for various groups to emerge around both High and Low wings. In particular, pressure

groups emerge during periods of crisis when one of these traditions appears to gain in influence. In modern Methodism, a crisis has resulted from the problems of ecumenism.

The contending factions whose divergent aims complicated the ecumenical negotiations before the 1932 Union were largely arranged into High and Low groups. The "Other Side" - a predominantly Wesleyan, ministerial opposition group - were fearful lest union with non-Wesleyans would dilute their High Methodism principles and also lessen the possibility of a final reunion with Anglicanism. Other anti-union groups, such as the "Progressives" - mainly ex-Free Methodists - felt that the existing ecumenical proposals would involve a compromise of Low Methodist principles, especially the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

While both Progressives and Other Side withdrew their opposition to the Union, the conflict between both extreme positions was taken into the united Methodist Church of 1932. High and Low sections of Methodism were anxious to preserve their traditions in the new denomination. The sacramentalist wing of the Other Side tended to emerge in the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship.

The MSF was inaugurated at a conference of thirty-three people at Colwyn Bay in August, 1935. The aims of the Fellowship were

formulated at the inaugural conference:

- (1) Re-affirmation of the faith that inspired the Evangelical Revival and the hymns of the Wesleys - the Faith that is formulated in the Nicene Creed.
- (2) Making the Holy Communion central in the life of the Methodist Church.
- (3) Re-union. Adhering to the principles of the Reformation, yet being convinced that the divisions of the Church Militant are becoming ever more clearly contrary to the will of God, the Fellowship works and and prays for the corporate re-union of all believers.

Individual members of the Fellowship gave three pledges, which were of daily prayer, daily Bible reading and a monthly reception of Holy Communion. The three aims of the MSF and the three personal pledges implied correspondingly three dissatisfactions with pre-war Methodism.

Firstly, the MSF was disturbed by the signs of increasing secularism and materialism in Britain and felt that adherence to a clearly articulated theology was one weapon against such social tendencies. Secondly, the Fellowship was concerned to stem what it felt was a tide of irreverence in public worship. In a speech to Conference, J. Rattenbury, a leading MSF member, listed the following irreverences:

- (a) Constant chattering in the House of the Lord;
- (b)/

- (b) The sitting posture at prayer.
- (c) Miscellaneous garments in pulpit and choir;
- (d) Utter disrespect of sacred objects such as the Communion Table.
- (e) Semi-secular solos and many other practices which need not be enumerated (2)

The third aim of the MSF was to "balance the onesided Free Church Re-union projects".(3)

Although in the long run the MSF had considerable success in gaining recognition and acceptance of its aims and basis, in the first instance the Fellowship faced considerable opposition. In 1937, Conference received thirteen petitions from circuits and one from a synod asking for an investigation of the principles of the MSF. A committee reported to the following Conference that in fact there was no widespread indifference to doctrine and that Methodism was as committed as the MSF to re-union with episcopal and non-episcopal churches. The committee felt, however, that the standards and practices of the MSF were not

furthering a re-union in which the
Free Churches may all be associated.(4)

Criticising the second aim of the Fellowship, the committee expressed the judgment that the MSF had

isolated the Lord's Supper from other
means of grace.(5)

J. Ernest Rattenbury's speech to the Hull Conference in reply to the committee report was little short of brilliant and probably helped to save the MSF from an early death. By defending the Fellowship's sacramentalism on the basis of John Wesley's devotional discipline and the eucharistic hymns of Charles Wesley, the speech was indicative of the High and Low split in Methodism which the 1932 Union had once more brought to a head. Having countered the charges brought against the MSF by the Conference committee, Rattenbury concluded by observing that the real basis of criticism of the MSF rested on a fear of ritualism. Rattenbury argued that, since Methodism itself had become increasingly ritualist in its public worship, the MSF was no longer in disharmony with existing practices. Rattenbury claimed that he was the first Wesleyan to have worn the double collar and stock in 1895 which was then seen as a Romanizing influence. He surmized that between eighty and ninety percent of the Methodist ministry wore them by the time of Methodist Union. Rattenbury went on to enumerate morning celebrations of Communion, the use of crosses on alters, the wearing of gowns and the presentation of the offertory, which had once raised the cry of "No Popery", but were now standard Methodist practice.

Because of the disruptions caused by World War II, criticism of the MSF was submerged beneath the concerns for preserving Methodism

in Britain and abroad. After the war time collapse of the MSF membership, the Fellowship once more returned to the problem of consolidating its membership and pressing its claims.⁶ Changes of attitude at Conference since the War have been entirely consistent with MSF policy. In 1947, frequency of communion was laid down as a monthly duty and lay administrators of the Sacraments were to receive instruction by the Chairman of the District. With the commencement of Anglican-Methodist negotiations in July 1956, the MSF had achieved its aim of counter-balancing the movement towards union with the Free Churches.

Unlike other contemporary pressure groups in Methodism, the MSF did not take up a particularly militant position. Since the Fellowship favoured unity as a far broader objective than re-union with the Church of England. In correspondence with me, the Rev. Marcus Ward, a long standing member in the Fellowship, stated

We are wholly in favour of uniting with the Anglicans but not as an end in itself, rather as one way forward. I imagine that most would favour the present Scheme in general and hope for greater things within stage one. Whether the group would continue as such I cannot say - but the things it stands for must go on.

The wider view of unity was also put by L. Orchard:

..paying due regard to our Methodist origins,
to work and pray for the restoration of
Catholic unity in the one Catholic Militant. (8)

It is a matter of speculation whether or not the ecumenical failure of 1969 will prove in the long run a major obstacle to the continuance of the MSF. It may be that disappointment with the Anglican vote will drive ecumenical energies elsewhere and sap support for the pro-Anglicanism of the MSF. For the Fellowship itself, members may come to feel that Anglican-Methodist negotiations were too parochial and that a wider unity of any importance can be achieved only by a rapprochement with the Roman Catholic Church.

An interesting example of the development of a group which may be seen as a parallel to the pre-Union Progressives is to be found in the case of the Methodist Revival Fellowship. The MRF started in embryo with a group of Methodist ministers and laymen who met annually after the Second World War for prayer and Bible study. These meetings led eventually to the creation of a specific MRF organization within Methodism in January, 1952. Official recognition came at the Conference of 1955⁹.

The MRF attempted to conserve and to strengthen the principles of what it saw as authentic Methodism by encouraging personal devotion as an antidote to religious formalism and centralism. The MRF

exists to bring together those of the "people called Methodists" who are really concerned that the Methodist Church should under the hand of God, fulfill the historic mission, and who are/

longing for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Churches.(10)

In their personal devotions, members of the MRF promised to

continue steadfastly in definite believing prayer for revival in my own heart, in my own Church, to seek to learn more about Revival from the Scriptures and to lead my life according to the teaching of scripture. (11)

Alongside adherence to personal holiness, the MRF took a fundamentalist position on Scripture and on what it called "Classical Methodist doctrine". Because it viewed the condition of modern Methodism as moribund, the MRF's commitment to fundamentalism became a form of crusade. The Fellowship felt it was

being called to take an uncompromising stand upon the Scriptures. (12)

It also felt compelled to "uphold the foundation doctrines of our church" which are the "Four Alls of Methodism" - all men need to be saved, all men can be saved, all men may know themselves saved and all men may be saved to the uttermost.

Although the MRF was initially a devotional movement, it became increasingly drawn into an anti-union position after 1963 because of its opposition to the doctrinal bases of the ecumenical proposals. For the MRF, support for the Conversations Report was inconsistent with full adherence to Scripture. The Chairman of MRF, Ronald Lamb, put the dilemma to the Fellowship directly after the publication of

the Report. If Conference accepted the Report, would the MRF be prepared

to apply scriptural principles which may lead us to stand apart from what the Minority Report described as "this new Church"?
(14)

If Conference rejected the Report, the Chairman asked

"Is the co-operation of evangelicals with non-evangelicals within our present denominational set-up truly consistent with a policy of total commitment to Scripture?"(15)

Between 1963 and 1967 the problem of deciding on unity and co-operation with non-evangelicals was partly shelved, since Conference had neither accepted nor rejected the Conversations Report. The intervening period was taken up with consolidating the MRF by the creation of local devotional groups, known as Searcher Groups. There was also theological consolidation which was necessitated by the so-called Charismatic Revival which caught the attention of MRF members in the mid 60's. The Sound of Revival, the movement's journal, and the MRF committee were busy steering their members away from the dangers of excessive involvement in the Charismatic Revival.

X Although the 1967 report, Towards Reconciliation, made concessions to criticism which had been offered by dissentients, the MRF felt that the new document did not meet basic objections which had been levelled at the 1963 Report¹⁶. Because MRF members felt that unity would

involve a compromise, anti-union feeling hardened and attitudes towards the ecumenical situation became more sharply defined. In 1967, the editor of the Sound of Revival outlined four possible courses of action:

- (1) To accept the Conversations, as they are, and become part of the United (?!!!) Church.
- (2) To accept them, but to withhold ourselves from the Service of Reconciliation, if permitted to do so.
- (3) To help form a Continuing Methodist Church.
- (4) To depart into some independent Evangelical Church, or Church of a denomination not involved in Union Schemes.(17)

After 1967, the MRF attempted to select an option which would not involve compromise but which would also be the least painful. Prior to the failure of Anglican-Methodist union, the second option of non-involvement seemed to gain the most support in the MRF.

The merits of non-involvement were presented by the Rev. John Barker in 1968. To reject the ecumenical proposals would safeguard the total commitment to Scripture but would put the MRF out side the debate on unity. The secessors, he argued, would no longer count as an opposition since they would be already outside Methodism. An argument for accepting the ecumenical scheme would be that evangelicals within Anglicanism would be strenghtened by Methodist evangelicals.

An evangelical alliance in a united church would offer the possibility of change from within. Barker, however, felt that evangelicals would in fact not be an influential group since they rarely received positions of leadership in the church:

There is hardly one conservative evangelical amongst the Chairmen of districts in our English Conference. This anomaly is also observable amongst other high ranking connexional officials.(18)

Because total secession and total acceptance were equally unpalatable, the MRF found itself opting for a policy of non-involvement which would offer it room for manoeuvre without necessary compromise. Such a position, however, would have created difficulties at stage two of the Scheme since at this point the two churches would have achieved organic union. The status and authority of ministers who had not participated in the Service of Reconciliation would have become increasingly ambiguous and untenable. Therefore, a policy of non-involvement was a delaying tactic which put off the decision for or against acceptance. Other Methodist dissenters gravitated towards this radical choice far more rapidly.

Unlike the Revival Fellowship, the Voice of Methodism Association did not start as a devotional movement, but emerged out of the specific crisis in 1963 with the Dissident Report. With the creation of the joint Methodist-Anglican association, Towards Anglican-Methodist

Unity, dissenters felt that there existed a need for the creation of a popular movement to guarantee the principles of the Deed of Union:

VMA was created to voice both what was the conviction of many Methodists and also to see that the Methodist witness and message was not swamped by the ecumenists. (19)

VMA was formally created at Westminster Central Hall in January 1964.

While the VMA had a different origin and orientation, its aims and beliefs were not dissimilar from those of the MRF. It adhered to what it called the Epworth Quadrilateral or the Four Alls of Methodism. It took the 1932 Deed of Union as the orthodox basis of Methodism and claimed that

The "Voice of Methodism" is the Voice of the Deed of Union. (20)

The VMA felt that the Report of 1963 offered a basis for union which was inconsistent with the Deed of Union and which would require a compromise of principles. The Report was criticized on the specific grounds that "the proposals are a move towards sacerdotalism and away from the Protestant Faith", the Service of Reconciliation would be an act of re-ordination, the laying on of hands would involve an acceptance of the principle of historic episcopacy, the validity of the sacraments "is not governed by having a name on the Membership Roll" and that by restricting communion to confirmed Anglicans, the Methodists would be committed to excluding "all those people that the Anglicans have failed to retain"²¹.

The main problem which faced the dissenters was not the discovery of doctrinal error on the part of the ecumenists, but the development of a viable alternative. The MRF proposed a revival of personal religion through "definite believing prayer" and non-involvement in the short term. While the VMA has set up similar devotional groups to those of the MRF, it has on the whole gone straight for organizational rather than personal solutions to the dilemmas of ecumenism. One alternative to the Anglican-Methodist union which was advocated in 1963 was a union of Free Churches on an international scale which would counter-act the "movement to Rome". A union with the American Methodists would create "the biggest Protestant Church in the world". The declaration of the inaugural conference was, however, more modest:

- (1) Failing withdrawal, to secure the rejection of the present proposals for the union of the Methodist and Anglican Churches.
- (2) To work for the revival of the historic witness of Methodism.
- (3) To seek closer relationships among all Christian people.(22)

In order to strengthen the VMA at the grass roots of Methodism, the movement created local cells and house churches. In addition to providing local support, these VMA groups were an expression of the dissentient view that Methodism had become over-centralized and insensitive to local, lay needs. VMA supporters tended to equate

"ecumenist" and "bureaucrat" and referred to Methodist leaders as
 our connexional officials ("leaders" is
 a most inapt word!) (23)

The VMA sought to free its own groups from official control. In
 this connection, the VMA's Syllabus of Group Studies advised that
 group meetings must

be free from interference by connexional
 or circuit officials. (24)

While the VMA groups may be seen as an attempt to revive the
 traditional class meeting, they were also examples of the typical
 reaction of schismatic Methodism to rid itself of centralized oversight
 and officialdom. The fear that the traditions of local autonomy and
 lay involvement would be swamped by centralism and sacramentalism,
 which were seen as necessary consequences of ecumenism, was expressed
 in the VMA's total rejection of the ecumenical reports and in its
 arrangements for a separate Methodism.

Members of the Methodist Church who found either the VMA's criti-
 cism of the Scheme too strong or its rejection of ecumenism too
 radical, gravitated towards the National Liaison Committee. In fact
 the NFC never openly defined itself as a milder alternative to the
 VMA, but claimed that it was an umbrella organization

to gather together the various groups in
 dissent and to co-ordinate their activities.
 (25)

The NLC was formed in 1965 at Leeds - an historic city for Methodist dissent - and issued a policy statement which became known as the Leeds Statement. The arguments in the Leeds Statement varied only in certain minor details from those which were common to the MRF and VMA, namely the doctrinal centrality of Scripture, the Deed of Union and the Protestant Reformation. In particular, the NLC aligned itself firmly with Low Methodist adherence to the priesthood of all believers and an open Communion Table. It argued, for example; that

Conference has not the power to create an order of priesthood with exclusive rights

and that union "on the present Catholic lines" would create division in Methodism²⁶.

Despite its restrained criticism of the union proposals, the NLC tended to move towards an increasingly radical position after 1965. NLC felt that Towards Reconciliation in 1967 failed to satisfy its objections. In April 1967, a second Statement was issued which outlined three courses of action: to continue in the Methodist Church but without participating in the Service of Reconciliation, to leave the Methodist Church for another Free Church or to create another Methodist Connexion. Given the possibility of a new Connexion, the NLC proposed

to invite the Conference of 1967 to appoint a committee to prepare a Contingency Plan for the peaceful division of the Methodist people. (27)

The publication of the Scheme in 1968 had the effect of throwing the NLC into the arms of the more radical VMA. From the NLC's point of view, the Scheme was unacceptable because it appeared to accept the principle of historic episcopacy, involved Methodist re-ordination and weakened the links with other Free Churches. By 1968, therefore, the NLC was poised for the creation of a new Connexion, possibly in association with the VMA:

We must plan for a continuing Methodist Church. This we propose to do at once, in collaboration with all those who share the same concern, and to the best of our ability. (28)

The central conflict in Methodist history can be written as a conflict between chapel and connexion or, as Currie expressed it, between

Wesley's search for Christian Perfection or Scriptural Holiness and the Methodist people's search for a religious democracy. (29)

The major struggle for democracy in Methodist organization occurred between 1797 with the break-away of the Methodist New Connexion and 1859 with the Wesleyan Reform Union. It could be assumed superficially that the conflict was resolved during the second half of the nineteenth century and was finally removed by the two twentieth century unions of 1907 and 1932. In fact, the 1932 Union also accentuated the continuing division between High and Low Methodists. Methodist ecumenical

negotiations threatened both traditions and endangered the continuity of independent local chapels³⁰. At the time of these negotiations, a member of the Progressives argued with considerable acumen:

There are two distinct types of Methodism in England - the specific Wesleyan type and that for which the United...and Primitive Methodist Churches have stood since their origin...the two types cannot be fused without sacrifice of principle on both sides....Surely we ought not to go back on our history. Our founders did not fight for mere expediency. They gave up much more for freedom, for the principles of true democracy in Church government, and for the principle of the "priesthood of all believers". (31)

The Anglican-Methodist negotiations of the sixties have in many ways duplicated the nineteenth century conditions which promoted schism. Dissenters have seen the attempt to unite the Church of England and the Methodist Church as involving both doctrinal and organizational principles. In particular, the MRF, VMA and NLC have thought that the basis of union was incompatible with total acceptance of Scripture, the Deed of Union and the Four Alls of Methodism. Organizationally, they have argued that historic episcopacy is a doctrine which will not provide for full lay involvement, local autonomy, an open Communion table and the acceptance of Methodist ministerial status without re-ordination. Behind the theological debate, there has been a specific fear that church bureaucracy and centralism, what the MRF called "organizational paralysis", would signal the end of Low Methodist

principles of lay control and local autonomy. In order to preserve this type of church order, dissentient groups have formed alliances, threatened to withdraw from Methodism and prepared for a reconstitution of Methodism under the slogan of "a continuing Methodism".

Thus in historical perspective, the period 1850-59 closely resembles the period 1963-69 for in both periods the High and Low wings of Methodism became more clearly demarcated and increasingly hostile towards each other. In the modern period the development of a full schismatic state of affairs was, however, forestalled in Methodism by the Anglican rejection of the Scheme, but the internal Methodist divisions remain.

Chapter 9References

- (1) This chapter is an extended version of my article "Discord in Modern Methodism", Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society, Vol. XXXVIII, 1970 (forthcoming). Other aspects of the data on ecumenism which were collected in the survey have been reported in B. Turner "Institutional Persistence and Ecumenicalism in Northern Methodism" in D. Martin (ed.) A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain, 2. London: SCM, 1969 and in M. Hill and B. Turner "The Laity and Church Unity" New Christian, No.93, 1969, pp.6-7
- (2) "In Defence of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship at the Conference of the Methodist Church at Hull, 1939" (the Speech of the Rev. J.E. Rattenbury, with notes), MSF pamphlet No.7, Southport: Taylor, 1939
- (3) *ibid.*, p.3.
- (4) *ibid.*, p.14.
- (5) *ibid.*
- (6) While no precise figures of MSF membership are available, it is certainly the case that the MSF has had a small membership. In correspondence with me, the Rev. Marcus Ward said that "membership has never been very large. Figures of membership reported in early MSF pamphlets were

1935	33
1936	180
1937	282
1939	320
1948	130

Perhaps what is more important is that membership lists reveal that the MSF ministers have outnumbered laymen by two to one.

- (7) A. Kingsley Lloyd, for example, was a leading MSF member, joint-chairman of Towards Anglican-Methodist Unity and a representative on the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission. TAMU existed between 1963 and 1965 to ensure that the ecumenical ideas were communicated to the grass roots of both churches. Both MSF and TAMU were seen by dissenters to be part of the same movement to manipulate lay opinion in favour of unity.
- (8) "The Bulletin", No.73, Taunton: Mounter and Co., 1968, p.8
- (9) No membership figures are available for the MRF, but in recent years it has been able to support three annual conferences at Swanick, High Leigh and Southport. Attendance figures at some recent conferences were:
- | | | |
|---------|------|-----|
| Hayes | 1956 | 90 |
| Swanick | 1965 | 400 |
| Swanick | 1967 | 300 |
- In 1966, Sound of Revival, the MRF magazine reported that "For the past few years "Swanick" as the November Conference is often called has been fully booked."
- (10) "The Methodist Revival Fellowship", Chelmsford: Simmons, n.d., section 7.
- (11) *ibid.*
- (12) *ibid.*, section 3
- (13) For example, an editorial in Sound of Revival, Vol.6, No.3 July, 1963, Lowestoft: Green, p:1 argued

Among the various "diseases" to which Christians are prone is one - "organization paralysis". It manifests itself in an inability to do anything without the presence of a committee; or plans to mass together at some organized rallying point.

You find it in the religion of Israel at certain times, when religious practices centred wholly upon the Temple, and enthusiasm was reserved for the great feast days.

- (14) Sound of Revival Vol.7, No.1, January 1964, p.3.
- (15) ibid., p.4.
- (16) The ecumenical reports which were of importance in the emergence of dissent in this period included -
Interim Statement, London: SPCK and Epworth Press, 1958;
Conversations between the Church of England and the Methodist, London: Church Information Office and Epworth Press, 1963; Towards Reconciliation, interim statement of the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission, London: SPCK and Epworth Press, 1967; Anglican-Methodist Unity, Report of the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission, Part 1, The Ordinal and Part 11 The Scheme, London: SPCK and Epworth Press, 1968.
- (17) Sound of Revival, Vol. 9, No.2, April 1967, p.1.
- X (18) Sound of Revival, Vol.10, No.3, July, 1968, p.3.
- (19) Quoted from a correspondence with the Rev. B. Barker, Hon. General Secretary of the VMA.
- (20) "The Voice of Methodism", Bulletin No.1, February, 1964, Redruth: Earle, Camborne Printing, p.4. In particular, the VMA saw itself as the defender of the famous clauses 30,31,32 in the Deed of Union which committed Methodist doctrine to the principles of the Protestant Reformation.
- (21) ibid., p.7.
- (22) "The Voice of Methodism records its Fears, its Beliefs, its Aims", n.d., no pagination, Leeds: Frisby, Sons and Whipple.
- (23) "The Voice", Bulletin 22, November, 1967.
- (24) "Suggested Syllabus of Group Studies", London: VMA, n.d., no pagination.
- (25) Quoted from private correspondence with the Rev. K. MacKenzie, Secretary of the NLC.

- (26) "A Statement", National Liaison Committee, 1965, no pagination.
- (27) "A Statement", National Liaison Committee, April 1967, no pagination.
- (28) "A Statement", National Liaison Committee, April, 1968.
- (29) R. Currie Methodism Divided: a Study in the Sociology of Ecumenicalism, London: Faber and Faber, 1968, p.81.
- (30) The small, rural Methodist chapel was probably the most threatened part of the Methodist system. Methodist leaders with an eye for efficiency have agreed that the small chapel competing with other equally small chapels is a major drain on resources. To some extent, this agreement of efficiency has overridden disagreements on ecumenism. Some aspects of small churches and redundancy are discussed in the following chapter. With regard to the 1932 Union the following quotation from J. Kent The Age of Disunity, London: Epworth Press, 1966, pp.36-37 is an interesting insight into the social situation of rural Methodism:

Many villages retained from the later nineteenth century three revival Methodist chapels, each weakening the other two. In the union negotiations centralizers and rationalizers hoped to reduce the financial drain which all this involved. Rasher prophets talked as though union would make possible the Methodist colonization of the several thousand villages which had no Nonconformist chapel; realists knew that with luck unity might facilitate the strategic withdrawal of Nonconformity from rural England.

- (31) John Hignan Ought We to Accept a Ministerial Session and the Case against Methodist Union on the Proposed Basis, n.d., pp.5, 31-2. Quoted in Currie, op.cit., p.264.

Chapter 10Size of Church and Religious Commitment

While the ecumenical spirit has been widely welcomed as the will of God, a secondary theme has been that ecumenism will make the churches more efficient. Organizational amalgamation will remove unnecessary religious competition and provide the churches with an opportunity for reducing the number of small, redundant churches. The benefits of increased efficiency were expected by the Methodist Conference of 1932:

The many proposals for local amalgamation which have been sanctioned by Conference, and the many additional schemes which are now in preparation, have proved conclusively that the Methodist people are everywhere animated by the spirit that triumphed in the Act of Union. While the concentration of effort and the economy of resources that are thus being made possible are specially valuable in a time of unexampled commercial and industrial depression, they are still more important as preparing the way for the great advance to which the Methodist Church is now Divinely called. (1)

More recently, the Anglican-Methodist unity discussion stimulated the hope that unity would encourage more men to offer for the ministry:

There is good reason to think that in many cases men who would otherwise have offered themselves have refused to enter the ministry of their Churches because of the pattern of

incompetence which they present in which disunity is a main feature.(2)

Although ecumenists have been optimistic about the gains in efficiency which may derive from unity, sociologists have been less optimistic. For example, both Kent and Currie have shown that membership continued to decline after the unions of 1907 and 1932 and that there was no appreciable improvement in efficiency after 1907³. There were, however, some indications of successful rationalization after 1932 in so far as there are now larger churches and less churches per minister⁴. The failures or successes of rationalization are not the kernel of the sociological interpretation of church rationalization. Rather, the attempt to use the techniques of rational organizations and the desire for improved efficiency have themselves been viewed by some sociologists as evidence of secularization. It may be a valuable exaggeration to say that a shift in the Church's self-image from the Body of Christ to a successful business corporation is an accommodation to secular norms and practices.

Weber, who was among the first sociologists to compare the Church-type with secular and economic institutions, laid much of the foundation for pessimistic views of large scale organizations.

For Weber:

A compulsory hierocratic association with continuous/

organization will be called a "church" if and in so far as its administrative staff claims a monopoly of the legitimate use of hierocratic coercion.(5)

Whereas the secular state had a monopoly of physical force, the church monopolized the means of psychic or hierocratic coercion. In addition to resembling the state, the church was analogous to business organizations in the religious field; the church, Weber said, was a "sort of trust foundation for supernatural ends"⁶. By contrast sects were defined as voluntary associations in which membership was restricted to those with some special religious qualification. The two types were further differentiated in terms of the nature of charisma. In the church, charisma was attached to the office of the clergy, but in sects charisma was attached to the person. The pessimistic strand of Weber's argument was located in his view of the ineluctable process of the routinization of charisma. With the death of the charismatic leader, charisma became "charisma of office" and authority was consequently located within a professional staff rather than in the extraordinary qualities of the leader. Furthermore, membership became achievable by birth into the religious organization. In short, Weber established the basis of the now familiar argument that, over time, sects become churches.

The church's adoption of bureaucratic forms of organization and techniques of self-evaluation has been seen by many contemporary

sociologists as further evidence of the diverse phenomena of routinization, denominationalization and accommodation to secular society. The church has been seen to become involved in the general malaise of mass society. Thus Lee commented that

The large urban church is symptomatic of the shift from a communal to an associational pattern. That is, segmental participation or partial involvement in many special interest associations takes the place of a community-centered focus....With specialization of roles and multiple ministerial staffs in our large urban churches, face-to-face primary group relationships are weakened and replaced by associational relationships.(7)

Lee thought that increasing size of church congregations promoted bureaucratization which not only made religious leaders distant from their laity but threatened the very nature of church membership:

For as a church increases its size beyond a certain point, it becomes exceedingly difficult to maintain adequate communications between leaders and members and an adequate sense of community among the members. Since the membership size is a symbol of "success" in our culture, it would appear that the large urban church is a victim of its own success. Thus the consequences of the organizational revolution for the large urban church call into question the very meaning of church membership.(8)

The religious organization's drive for success may be viewed as a response to the problem of pluralism in modern society. Because

religious organizations no longer have a monopoly of hierocratic or other forms of coercion, they are forced to compete with non-religious organizations for influence. Competition leads to specialization and rationalization. The argument in this form has been put forward by Peter Berger. In pluralistic societies, religious organizations need to trim their organizational structures to compete effectively in a market situation:

The key characteristic of all pluralistic situations, whatever the details of their historical background, is that the religious ex-monopolies can no longer take for granted the allegiance of their client populations. Allegiance is voluntary and thus, by definition, less than certain. As a result, the religious tradition, which previously could be authoritatively imposed, now has to be marketed. It must be "sold" to a clientele that is no longer constrained to "buy". The pluralistic situation is, above all, a market situation.(9)

The main indication of the church's ability to sell its religious commodity is the growth of church membership, and, as a result, the church becomes increasingly interested in the techniques of competitive marketing: advertising, public relations, consumer surveys and financing. Successful competition requires a high degree of efficiency. It is for this reason, among others, that bureaucracy, efficiency and ecumenism have become associated with each other. A case can be made for the claim that the bureaucratization of the church is a phenomenon peculiar to the American situation but Berger stressed the

point that this modern dilemma of the church is wide ranging:

it is not only in national societies with an American-type denominational system that one may speak of pluralism, but anywhere where religious ex-monopolies are forced to deal with legally tolerated and socially powerful revivals in the definition of reality.

(10)

Whether or not the problem of pluralism is most acutely experienced in American society, sociologists have seen the same growth of religious marketing practices in British society.

Bryan Wilson has argued that in British Society the problems of large-scale operations have given rise to bureaucratic structures within the churches and that as a result the churches have grown increasingly similar in terms of their organization:

As the pressure of competition in the field of missioning abroad, evangelization at home, maintaining good community services, fund-raising, welfare work, educational development and the like has developed, so Churches which at one time had little central organization have developed it, and they have done so, necessarily, on increasingly similar lines.(11)

Furthermore, the attempt to unite churches in turn leads to greater impersonality and bureaucracy since ecumenism creates ever larger organizational units. The adoption of business techniques in religious organizations fosters an almost total accommodation to secular society and further whittles away the basis of religious

communities in favour of religious bureaucracies. In this situation, Wilson saw sectarian groups as functioning to alleviate the growing impersonality of the religions of ecumenism:

It may be, that in response to the growing institutionalism, impersonality, and bureaucracy of modern society, religion will find new functions to perform - but that, perhaps, would not be the religion which accepts the values of the new institutionalism, the religion of ecumenism, but the religion of the sects.(12)

X

It was primarily in the nineteenth century that the theologians and scientists were grappling with the problem of the apparent incompatibility between scientific and religious thought. It was not an uncommon prediction that science would cut away the basis of religious belief; humanists and positivists sought rational grounds for values and action which would replace traditional religious foundations of human culture. To some extent, the debate in that form has been swept to the margins of twentieth century concern. Some sociologists would argue that, in fact, the intellectual debates of earlier centuries have been swept beyond the margins of concern:

In the 19th century, for example, many intellectuals agonised over questions of belief because at the growing points in their disciplines - in biology, in history and in philosophy - the conflicts with traditional Christian theology had to be settled before further intellectual progress could be made. This is no longer the case.....the most striking aspect of secularization is not that men do not give the same answers as they once did to these questions: it is that they have very often ceased even to ask the questions.
(12)

In so far as the questions are still raised, they are more likely to refer to the human problems of technology, applied science in social life and medical innovations rather than to ethical dilemmas resulting from the conflict between pure science and religion. The dilemmas of science in the field of human organization seem to lie behind some of the issues which have been raised by Wilson, Lee and other in the sociology of religion¹³.

It is argued that in modern societies the churches are compelled to adopt rational means of organization and that such means are fundamentally incompatible with the religious ethic of devotion and religious communal forms of association. A shift in focus from viewing the Church as the Body of Christ to the corporation of Christ entails wide-ranging changes in perspectives and behaviour. Moreover, such a change in perspective is viewed as fundamentally dangerous:

There can be few human activities on which rational planning, administrative co-ordination and the regulations of bureaucratic organization have such deleterious effects as religious movements. For the demand for rationality is capable of transcending the specific religious ethic and distinctive faith of a movement. (14)

Few sociologists would wish to question the argument that the church's adoption of rational techniques is an important phenomenon in modern society and that such adoption has significant implications

for the nature of religious organizations and religious commitment¹⁵.

The argument is questionable on the grounds that frequently it assumes that all the effects of rational organization must be "deterious". Furthermore, definitions of and assumptions about
 X bureaucracy, large-scale operations, centralization are often unexamined. One possible reason why the argument has considered only the dysfunctions of bureaucracy is that it has been based on a "metaphysical pathos".

It has been a traditional sociological view that there are necessary, causal links between increasing size and bureaucracy, on the one hand, and increasing bureaucratization and loss of individual autonomy on the other. The argument which is the root of pessimism in Weber, Michels and Selznick is that, since modern societies operate on the basis of increasing scale, they necessarily become bureaucratic societies in which human freedom is continuously undermined¹⁶. Bureaucratic societies are by definition mass societies. The theory of mass society is, however, less important for this discussion than the application of the argument to organizations and in particular to religious organizations¹⁷. In recent years, the pessimistic theory of bureaucracy has been criticized because it rests on unexamined assumptions about the interrelations between complexity, specialization and size.

It has, for example, been pointed out that there is no necessary

connexion between the increased scale of operations and increased bureaucratization¹⁸. Gouldner noted that the construction of the Egyptian pyramids was achieved without bureaucratic forms of organization and that alternatively small organizations may be highly bureaucratic¹⁹. Similarly, the assumption that efficiency depends on the minute division of labour was found to be unsupportable in Drucker's analysis of large manufacturing organizations during the Second World War²⁰. Thompson has argued that over-concentration on the dysfunctions of bureaucracy has frequently obscured the valuable contribution of rational organization and concern for efficiency to social organizations:

bureaucracy serves the function of commending the Church to the general public as an institution which is not afraid to move with the times - a not unimportant consideration in a period of rapid social change. This type of organizational change in the nineteenth century reduced the Church of England's vulnerability to charges of nepotism (if not of social bias). It also enabled it to interact more easily, and to transact business, with those similar structures which had appeared in other fields of organization-government, business, education and the like. (21)

Of course, sociologists who have some commitment to a pessimistic view of bureaucracy in human life might agree that their attitudes have led them to over-draw the dysfunctional aspects of rational organization within churches, but would still maintain that bureaucratization has important implications for the nature of religious

allegiance. In short, sociologists may wish to claim that, despite criticism of the assumptions of metaphysical pathos, increasing size means decreasing religious commitment. The data from Yorkshire Methodism suggest, however, that the size of church has no necessary relationship with the level and nature of religious commitment. These findings would, therefore, serve as the basis for the hypothesis that the rationalization of redundant churches may not seriously affect religious commitment²².

On the face of it, Methodism would appear to warrant the label of "bureaucracy". Structurally, Methodism is organized into layers of authority in which ultimate control is vested in Conference. Methodist circuits are staffed by religious professionals who receive their training in the organization's own colleges. It is a relatively large-scale organization with almost seven hundred thousand lay members and approximately four thousand ministers. The scale of organization requires considerable attention to such details as fund-raising, public relations and the allocation of resources. Furthermore, Methodism, like other British denominations, is on the point of setting up teams of specialists whose specific concern is to evaluate the success of the organization²³. To describe Methodism as a bureaucracy is, however, to miss the important point that Methodist chapels

have very small congregations. The average size of Methodist chapels in 1965 was sixty-four members and in the West Riding of Yorkshire, a third of the chapels had a membership of under thirty-two persons in 1968. At the local level, concepts of "mass" and "bureaucracy" are somewhat misleading and Methodism could be better described as a collection of semi-autonomous primary groups within a bureaucratic framework. Yet, even at this level, the processes of increased scale seem ineradicable.

Since 1932, Conference has been attempting to rationalize Methodist resources by closing redundant churches in the expectations of the benefits of increased scale. Although one can only estimate chapel sizes on the basis of official membership statistics, the X average size of Methodist chapels in the 1930's was under twenty members, but by the 1950's the average size had shot up to fifty-five persons. In 1967, the figure had reached sixty-five members per chapel (Table 10:1). As a result of rationalization, the small chapel is gradually disappearing in Methodism and, according to sociological pessimism, the removal of tight-knit religious communities within the larger structure of the church entails an undermining of the qualities of religious life. When small churches are closed on the criterion of efficiency, many members will in fact refuse to amalgamate with other Methodist churches to form larger, more viable units²⁴.

Members from small churches who do participate in the new amalgamated churches find themselves in congregations where the processes of bureaucracy have worn down strong religious commitment. As a result of amalgamation, it is assumed that membership will decline and religious commitment will become increasingly marginal. While data X from Yorkshire are somewhat tangential to this dynamic process of church closure, the data showed that, when viewed from a static perspective, there were few statistically significant differences between large, medium and small churches in terms of religious commitment²⁵.

There would be good sociological grounds for assuming that in small churches the enforcement of social norms would be more adequately achieved than in large, amorphous churches and that there would be more social support for conformity. In small churches, deviance from Methodist standards would be more readily detected. The greater facility for socialization into and social support for orthodox belief would create in small churches a higher level of commitment to Christian belief. The data revealed, however, that on three important beliefs of orthodox Christianity there was no difference in terms of church size. Chi-square tests showed that there was no statistically significant difference in terms of belief in God, the divinity of Jesus and belief in faith in Christ as a requirement for salvation for different sizes of church (Tables 10:2, 10:3, 10:4). The only significant difference between churches was found in the case of belief in life

after death (Table 10:5).

In this thesis, it has been argued that formal belief was not central to the Methodist ethos and that belief needs to be set firmly within the context of other aspects of religious commitment, namely practice and experience. Both religious practice and experience provide support for and evidence of the validity of belief. It would appear that the size of a congregation has very little relationship to religious practice. There was, for example, no difference between churches in terms of public, formal religious worship (Table 10:6). The absence of a significant difference may, however, be explained by the provision of religious services in general rather than by religious commitment. Since small churches tend to be located in rural areas where geographical isolation and shortage of man power are important aspects of organizational facilities, the provision for worship is less adequate than for urban, large churches²⁶. For this reason, it would be meaningless to compare different sizes of church on attendance at Holy Communion.

The pattern of private devotion is even more difficult to assess. Churches differed in terms of private prayer but not in terms of Bible reading (Tables 10:7, 10:8). Private devotion has been taken as a particularly sensitive measure of religious commitment. It is less

affected by social pressures for conformity and little social "merit" need accrue from private devotion. On these grounds, it would appear that small church members are more committed than medium or large church members. However, within the field of private worship, Bible reading rather than prayer would appear a more stringent measure of religious practice. On this more taxing criterion, no difference was observed. Members of small churches tend to be more committed to some aspects of devotion, but the differences between churches disappear on more fundamental standards of demanding worship.

The real focus of sociological interest in church size, differentiation and complexity has been, of course, not so much on belief and practice but on the nature of social relationships. For example, the change from sect to Church has been variously understood as a change from gemeinschaft to gesellschaft forms of interaction, from religious community to religious audience or from primary to secondary group²⁷. In small primary communities, involvement is total whereas in larger, bureaucratic organizations commitment is segmental. Lee argued that the large urban church was more like a crowd than a community:

The congregation on a Sunday mornint is a sea of more or less impassive faces. Everyone is alone in the crowd, be it subway or sanctuary. Strangers they come and strangers they go.(28)

While Lee's attitude towards the anonymity of large churches reflects a widespread notion that satisfactory social relations can only be established within small, face-to-face groups, the data from Yorkshire suggested at first sight, that the size of church had very little bearing on primary relations and commitments.

One would expect, for example, that in small churches members would be more involved from day to day in church activities. In fact, no statistical difference was found between sizes of church when the number of evenings spent in church per week was compared (Table 10:9). Unfortunately, this is a very weak and indirect measure of involvement. It may be that large churches offer more weekly meetings than small churches. Similarly, rural isolation, old age and illness could account for low attendance in small churches. Since no evidence was collected to assess the total number of meetings which were available per week in each type of church, it is impossible to treat this finding as particularly important.

On the face of it small churches did not appear to have a higher degree of fellowship than other sizes of church. When respondents were asked "Of your five best friends, how many are members of your congregation?", no statistically significant difference was found for size of church (Table 10:10). The inadequacy of this indicator of fellowship has already been discussed in chapter five, but some

additional commentary is pertinent at this point. Given the fact that small churches have a membership of under thirty-two people, it is significant that so many small church members had between three and four of their five best friends within the same congregation. While there was no difference in terms of the sheer number of friends in different church sizes, friendships in small churches were concentrated into a small group of people. It was hardly surprising that at least some friends would be made in churches where the number of persons who could become close friends ranged from eight-five to over four hundred. While members of large churches do have close friends at church, the great majority of such members view each other as strangers. Despite the statistical finding, it is legitimate to view small churches as characterized by a high degree of fellowship. Another plausible interpretation would be that the Methodist ethos of communalism and fellowship has survived rationalization: Methodist fellowship has been preserved despite the growth in size of churches. If this is the case, that fellowship has been maintained and that small churches are highly communal, it may go some way to explain why it was that churches differed so noticeably in terms of religious experience.

Stark argued in "Social Contexts and Religious Experience" that religious experience was not problematic in the sense that it could be explained by reference to social processes rather than by reference

to abnormal psychology²⁹. "Normal" persons may be expected to undergo religious experiences where there is social pressure and social support for such experience. Hence, the basic social context of religious experience is within a primary group. Stark found that religious experiences were more prevalent among fundamentalist groups where there was a high degree of social integration than among liberal denominations which were characterized by a low degree of fellowship. However, even within liberal denominations, members who were located in friendship groups within the more impersonal denominations were more likely to report religious experiences. Stark concluded that

a good proportion of religious experience
can be attributed to norm compliance
within enduring social situations. (30)

If the assumption that small churches are good examples of "enduring social situations" is correct, then the data on Methodists in Leeds supported Stark's conclusion that religious experience is primarily located in integrated social groups.

Rather than re-examine data which have already been discussed in chapter six, attention is drawn to two important examples of religious experience of the divine. Members of small churches were found to experience the presence of God more frequently than members of large churches (Table 10:11). The difference between the churches on this item of experience was found to be significant at .05. When salvational experiences were compared, statistical significance occurred

at .01 (Table 10:12). This was a particularly important finding since it has been argued that experience of the divine was central to early Methodism. The evidence of Christianity, and hence the assurance of salvation, was based in Methodism on experience rather than cognitive certainty of the validity of Christian truth. The Methodist emphasis on experience has been preserved far better in small churches where there is good reason to assume that communalism has been better maintained than in large churches. While no difference between church size was found in terms of formal belief and public worship, members of small churches are far more likely to have experiences of salvation and of the presence of God.

Conclusion

It was at one time quite common to refer to economics as a "dismal science". Whether or not sociology inherited a pessimistic view of human society from Malthus, Pareto and Parsons, it is certainly the case that traditionally sociology has viewed the development of bureaucracy with a high degree of suspicion. With the publication of Democracy in America, the enigma of extended socio-political freedoms and increased state control and bureaucratization has continued to invite sociological explanation. A long line of sociologists from de Tocqueville to Mannheim has drawn causal links between democracy, mass society and bureaucracy. The argument has been that

democratic equalization of social and political conditions creates an undifferentiated mass society and that mass demand for equal opportunities in education and equal access to medical and other facilities results in extensive state bureaucracies.

A rather similar "metaphysical pathos" has underlain the discussion of sect and Church. In so far as conversionist sects are successful in their evangelization of society, they grow in size with the result that they develop professional ministries, centralized organizations and techniques for assessing their performance on rational criteria. In accommodating to society, churches also adopt the organizational standards and practices of secular organizations. Churches attempt to rationalize their structures by closing redundant churches and by attempting to allocate their scarce resources to achieve maximum returns. As a consequence, the Church loses its communal nature and becomes an impersonal association which is directed by bureaucratic rather than theological standards.

While this view of bureaucratic organization has been heavily criticized by sociologists there are adequate reasons for believing that Methodism since its unification has become involved in a movement for improved organizational efficiency and that its concern for rationalization will have important long term implications for the denomination. It is likely that the withdrawal from depopulated areas of Britain will continue, that churches will tend to become larger and

that concern for its declining membership will lead to the adoption
X of essentially secular means of organizational improvement. However,
emphasis on the dysfunctions of rational organization within Methodism
would be one-sided and unduly pessimistic. Although members may
leave Methodism when small churches are closed in order to amalgamate
them with larger churches, this need not entail any change in terms
of certain dimensions of religious commitment in Methodism. The data
from Methodism in Yorkshire suggested that size of church is not an
important variable in determining the nature of religious belief and
practice. Members of large churches are no less committed to belief
and practice than members of medium and small churches. However, the
increasing size of Methodist chapels may have serious consequences
for encouragement and social support of religious experience. Sociol-
ogical evidence indicates that religious experiences are more prevalent
in primary groups where friendship bonds are strong than in large
secondary groups in which there is greater impersonality. The decline
of the small Methodist chapel may be yet one more step in Methodism's
departure from an emphasis on the importance of experiencing salvation.

Chapter 10References

- (1) Annual Address, Minutes of the Methodist Conference, 1932.
- (2) Anglican-Methodist Unity, Report of the Anglican-Methodist Unity Commission, Part II, The Scheme, London: SPCK and Epworth Press, 1968, paragraph 10.
- (3) For a discussion of Methodism's attempt to rationalize its redundant churches, cf. J. Kent The Age of Disunity London: Epworth Press, 1966, chapter 1 and R. Currie Methodism Divided: a Study in the Sociology of Ecumenicalism, London: Faber and Faber, 1968, chapter 9.
- × (4) Currie, *ibid.*, p.300 ff.
- (5) M. Weber The Theory of Social and Economic Organization (trans. by A.M. Henderson and T. Parsons) Free Press of Glencoe, 1947, p.154.
- (6) M. Weber The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (trans. T. Parsons), London: Unwin University Books 1930, p. 144.
- (7) R. Lee "The Organizational Dilemma in American Protestantism" in R. Lee (ed.) Cities and Churches: Readings on the Urban Church, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962, p.228.
- (8) Lee, *ibid.*, p.230.
- (9) P.L. Berger The Social Reality of Religion, London: Faber and Faber, 1969, p.137.
- (10) *ibid.*
- (11) B. Wilson Religion in Secular Society: a Sociological Comment, London: Watts and Co., 1966, p.119.

- (12) A. MacIntyre "Secularization", The Listener, Vol.79 No. 2029, February 1968, p.194.
- (13) Cf. for example C.Y. Glock "On the Incompatibility of Religion and Science", Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Vol. III, No.1, Fall 1963; R. Robertson The Sociological Interpretation of Religion, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969.
- (14) Wilson, op.cit., p.140.
- (15) While developments in Britain have been slower than in France and America, there has been an increased interest in sociology as a discipline which may contribute to the church's self-evaluation in recent years. The creation of C.O.R.A.T. and the Methodists Sociology Group are indicative of this contemporary interest.
- (16) Cf. Weber, op.cit.; R. Michels Political Parties, Free Press of Glencoe, 1949; P. Selznick TVA and the Grass Roots, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1949.
- (17) For a critique of theories of mass society, cf. D. Bell The End of Ideology, Free Press of Glencoe, 1960, Chapter 1.
- (18) The main focus of the argument is on A.W. Gouldner "Metaphysical Pathos and the Theory of Bureaucracy", American Political Science Review, 49, (1955), pp.496-507, but cf. in addition R. Bendix "Bureaucratization: the Problem and its Setting", American Sociological Review, Vol.12, 1947, pp.502-7; S.N. Eisenstadt "Bureaucracy, Bureaucratization and Debureaucratization", Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol.4, 1959, pp.302-320; P.M. Blau Bureaucracy in Modern Society, New York, 1956.
- (19) For a discussion of bureaucracy in small scale organizations, cf. R. Bendix's discussion of the Boulton and Watt factory of 1775-1805 in R. Bendix "Bureaucratization in Industry" in Kormhauser, Dubin and Ross (eds.) Industrial Conflict, New York, 1954 (cited in Gouldner, op.cit.)

- (20) P. Drucker Concept of the Corporation, New York: John Day, 1946.
- (21) K. Thompson "Bureaucracy and the Church" in D. Martin (ed.) A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain, 1, London: SCM Press, 1968, p.34.
- (22) At the commencement of the research it was assumed that in fact church size would be an important independent variable. Accordingly, the cumulative frequency of church sizes in the District was grouped in tertiarities of large, medium and small size churches. Small churches had a membership of under thirty-two, medium churches between thirty-three and eighty-five members and large churches more than eighty-five members. The procedures which were used in stratifying the sample have been discussed in chapter three.
- (23) Cf. footnote 15
- (24) While this assumption is plausible, very little research has been conducted on the loss of membership which results from amalgamation. Kent, Currie and Wilson all assume that because of the traditional nature of allegiance to particular chapels, such a loss of membership is to be expected.
- X (25) The data are to be seen as tangential to the problem, because an adequate treatment of rationalization would require a panel analysis of transferred memberships. Furthermore, one would want to distinguish between large churches in terms of whether they were in fact amalgamations of small churches, amalgamations of small and medium size churches and so on.
- (26) For a discussion of the provisions made for rural Methodism, cf. Commission on Rural Methodism, Agenda of the Representative Session of the Conference, Newcastle, 1958.
- (27) For a contemporary discussion of the difference between the church as a "moral community" and an "audience", cf. R. Stark and C.Y. Glock Patterns of Religious Commitment: Vol.1, American Piety: the nature of religious commitment, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968, chapter 8.
- (28) Les, op.cit., p.229
- (29) R. Stark "Social Contexts and Religious Experience", Review of Religious Research, Vol.7, No.1, Fall 1965, pp.17-28
- (30) *ibid.*, p.27.

Table 10:1

Methodist Membership, Number of Chapels
and Average Size of Chapel Membership
for Selected Years.

Year	Membership	Number of Chapels	Average Size (rounded to nearest whole number)
1934	834,488	93,956	9 ⁽¹⁾
1938	808,496	93,389	9
1950	743,474	13,524	55
1954	743,590	13,524	55
1963	710,774	11,106	64
1967	666,713	10,257	65

(1) Because of massive changes within Methodism in the years following the 1932 Union, most membership statistics for this period are dubious. It would be more realistic to assume an average chapel size of between 20 - 30 members.

Table 10:2

Belief in God
(Percentage.)

Response	Size of Church		
	Large	Medium	Small
"I know that God really exists and I have no doubts about it."	60.2	67.5	73.0
"While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God." and "I find myself believing in God some of the time but not at other times."	31.7	23.6	18.7
"I don't believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power of some kind."	5.7	4.9	1.0

p > .05

Table 10:3

Belief in Jesus
(Percentage)

Response	Size of Church		
	Large	Medium	Small
"Jesus is the Divine Son of God and I have no doubts about it."	66.8	70.7	80.2
"While I have some doubts I feel that Jesus is divine."	17.9	16.3	8.3
Respondent felt that, in some way, Jesus was an extraordinary man but not essentially divine.	9.7	8.1	4.2

p > .05

Table 10:4Life after Death(Percentage)

Response	Size of Church		
	Large	Medium	Small
"Completely true."	55.3	64.2	72.9
"Probably true."	29.3	28.5	16.7
"Probably not true" and "Definitely not true."	9.7	4.0	4.1

p < .05

Table 10:5

Requirements for Salvation: Faith
("Belief in Jesus as Saviour")
(Percentage)

Response	Size of Church		
	Large	Medium	Small
"Absolutely necessary".	70.7	80.5	84.4
"Probably help".	17.9	9.8	7.4
"No influence".	4.1	2.4	1.0

p > .05

Table 10:6

Church Attendance
(Percentage)

Response	Size of Church		
	Large	Medium	Small
"Every week or nearly every week".	72.4	78.1	79.2
"At least once a month".	15.4	9.8	9.4
"At least once a year" and "Less than once a year".	11.4	12.1	10.4

p > .05

Table 10:7"How often do you pray?"(Percentage)

Response	Size of Church		
	Large	Medium	Small
"I pray regularly once a day or more".	42.3	56.1	51.0
"I pray quite often, but not at regular intervals".	26.0	23.6	34.3
"I pray once a week or more".	11.4	4.9	4.2
"Never or hardly ever".	19.5	13.0	6.3

p < .05

Table 10:8"How often do you read the Bible at Home?"(Percentage)

Response	Size of Church		
	Large	Medium	Small
"Once a day or more" and "At least once a week".	17.1	30.0	28.1
"Quite often but not regularly".	32.5	28.5	32.3
"Rarely or never" and "Seldom".	49.6	34.2	35.4

p > .05

Table 10:9

Number of Evenings Spent in Church
(Percentage)

Response	Size of Church		
	Large	Medium	Small
None	37.4	26.8	25.0
1 - 2 Evenings	41.4	53.7	50.0
3 - 4 Evenings	8.1	5.9	4.2

p > .05

Table 10:10

"Of your five best friends, how many
are members of your congregation?"
(Percentage)

Response	Size of Church		
	Large	Medium	Small
None	26.9	16.3	19.8
1 - 2 friends	30.1	29.3	23.9
3 - 4 friends	21.1	26.8	21.9
5 friends	19.5	24.3	24.0

p > .05

Table 10:11

Confirming Experience - "A Feeling that you
were somehow in the presence of God".
(Percentage)

Response	Size of Church		
	Large	Medium	Small
Yes, I'm sure I have	45.5	56.9	57.3
Yes, I think I have	36.6	23.6	21.9
No	13.8	12.2	6.2

$p < .05$

Table 10:12

Salvational Experience - "A Sense of
being saved in Christ" (Percentage).

Response	Size of Church		
	Large	Medium	Small
"Yes, I'm sure I have".	25.2	38.2	42.7
"Yes, I think I have".	26.8	27.6	22.9
"No".	30.9	20.3	11.5

p < .01

Table 10:12

Salvational Experience:

"A sense of being saved in Christ" (Percentage)

Response	Size of Church		
	Large	Medium	Small
Yes, I'm sure I have.	25.2	38.2	42.7
Yes, I think I have.	26.8	27.6	22.9
No.	30.9	20.3	11.5

p < .01

Part 3

Comparison and Conclusion

Chapter 11The Herberg Thesis in Cross-cultural Perspective -
a comparison of American and British Methodism

In recent years there has been mounting criticism against sociology of religion based on the study of organized religion to the neglect of religious consciousness. While such a re-direction of sociology of religion is warranted, the problem of analyzing religious organizations remains. In addition to the secularization of human consciousness, sociologists expect religious organizations to become peripheral in society and for their membership to decline. A perennial problem facing the sociologist of religion, therefore, is to account for the marked differences between American and British churches. While America and Britain are urban and plurastic societies, organized religion in Britain has been in decline for at least a century, but it has remained powerful in America. No entirely satisfactory sociological explanation of this divergence exists, but the main theoretical guideline is still that which was put forward in the 50's by Will Herberg.

The Herberg Thesis

In attempting to account for the sixty percent increase in church membership between 1926 and 1950, Herberg posed his thesis within the context of the differential response of immigrant generations to their own and host cultures. The key concepts for understanding these responses are self-identification and social location. Emigration to America jettisoned the great majority of migrants out of traditional, village life into a society which was both highly mobile and extensively pluralistic. Although the economic problems of survival in the new society were dominant for first generation migrants, there was also the problem of transplanting and preserving their traditional ethnic culture. It was with the attempt to re-establish village and ethnic links within the new communities that the first stage of Americanization occurred. Because of the paramount difficulties of communication in a multi-lingual society, immigrants inevitably converged into language groups. Hence it was not possible simply to establish village churches along traditional lines. Rather the immigrant church emerged as the major focus of ethnicity, language and religion. The church as the main articulator of "old country" interests provided the new immigrant with familiar patterns of self-identification and social location. By contrast,

the response of the second generation to host and ethnic cultures was far more ambivalent.

The second generation was American born, yet still immigrants. At home they followed the interests and spoke the language of their immigrant culture; at school and at work, their interests were American, their language, English. A number of solutions for the problem of social marginality were adopted. Some segments of the second generation were able to exploit their marginality by acting as mediators between the host and immigrant communities. Frequently, their activity took on a passionate political dimension as the language group came to constitute a powerful voting block. The great majority of the second generation, however, found their foreignness an obstacle to social mobility and successful assimilation. A necessary condition of social success was Americanization. This segment of the second generation, therefore, responded to their marginality by rejecting their ethnic culture, and, since the ethnic church was a bulwark of immigrant old country culture, this also entailed a rejection of the religion of their parents.

With the emergence of the third generation the situation of assimilation and social location was once more transformed. The third generation felt American, spoke its language and had no sense of foreignness. Yet they still had an acute problem of self-definition and

social location in an impersonal society. They possessed neither the community and religious links of their grand-parents nor the politico-ethnic interests of their fathers. For the third generation religious identification became an optimal choice largely because American society expected the immigrant to modify all aspects of his ethnic culture without necessarily abandoning his church. Yet the continuity of religion into the third generation is deceptive. Just as the immigrant was assimilated into society by a process of Americanization, so religion underwent a similar accommodation. One facet of religious transmutation was that the multifarious sects and denominations became defined as Protestant, Catholic or Jewish. The definitions, however, were not so much theological as social. The church had become a social community in which men married, raised their children and found their leisure pursuits. The three great communities of American life did not represent three institutionalized forms of a basic Judaic-Christian faith so much as three divisions of the "American Way of Life".

The American Way of Life is not an epiphenomenon of Christianity but a separate and independent religion with its own beliefs, rituals and saints. There is, however, some degree of cultural diffusion between the two religions:

It should be clear that what is designated under the American Way of Life is not the so-called "common denominator" religion; it is not a synthetic system composed of beliefs to be found in all or in a group of religions. It is an organic structure of ideas, values and beliefs that constitutes a faith common to Americans and genuinely operative in their lives, a faith that markedly influences, and is influenced by, the "official" religions of American society.(1)

In its political guise, the American Way of Life stands for the Constitution, democracy and individual freedom; on the economic side, laissez-faire. Above all, the civic religion espouses individualism, pragmatism and activism. In short, the American Way of Life may be aptly described as a secularized Protestant Ethic:

as a kind of secularized Puritanism, a Puritanism without transcendence, without a sense of sin or judgment.(2).

Criticism of the Herberg Thesis

Criticism of Herberg's analysis of the American religious revival and the Americanization of religious content has centred on three focal issues: the statistical evidence of the revival, the place of sectarianism in American religion and the degree of divergence within the three divisions of American religion.

It has been frequently argued that the statistics of church membership, past and present, are so unreliable that no confidence can be placed in the evidence of the church's revival. Church membership statistics are unreliable because over time the definition of membership in some denominations has become more inclusive. Furthermore, little or no attempt has been made to control for double or multiple counting of mobile church members.³ On the other hand, many denominations fail to report their membership figures to the National Council of Churches. Evidence on religious attendance is equally unreliable, but on existing data there is no indication of a definite trend towards increased religiosity.⁴

Criticism of the statistical evidence of increased religiosity in America has had the valuable result of throwing doubt on its reliability and on the accuracy of generalizations of long term trends in religious adherence. However, if the evidence of a revival is un-

trustworthy, then the statistical support for alternative hypotheses - long term upward trend, stability or an acceleration of a long term increase in religiosity is presumably equally dubious. From the point of view of comparative religious studies, such detailed criticism of the statistical evidence appears parochial.⁵ The fact which needs emphasis is that, when compared with Britain and France, American society still exhibits a remarkable religiosity, whether or not this religiosity is undergoing upward or downward trends.

The two other major criticisms are perhaps more damaging. Lipset points out that those who argue that American religion is socially dominant at the cost of theological content have to contend with the fact that about ten million Americans follow evangelical faiths. Furthermore, the growth in church membership is predominantly the contribution of emergent sects. While this is a perfectly valid criticism, it does raise the larger issue of in what sense sectarian religion is more "religious" than denominational religion. By definition, a sect is more religious in the sense that it is not accommodated to the world. However, it has been argued that some sects are only transitional organizations which mediate between deprived social groups and the wider society and its values.⁶ In particular, holiness sects which espouse an inner-worldly asceticism can be seen to function as escalators between marginal groups and dominant social values and

positions.⁷ Whatever the complexities of the sociological analysis of sectarianism, it is certainly the case that Herberg failed to incorporate the important contribution of American sects into his analysis of American religion.

The final major weakness of the Herberg thesis is that it overestimated the degree of internal homogeneity of the three religious communities. Herberg treated Protestant, Catholic and Jew as labels of socioethnic communities between and within which there was fundamental agreement over beliefs. Because of this basic agreement, the three labels - "Protestant", "Catholic" and "Jew" - were not only interchangeable with each other but with the social label "American". Some aspects of this argument have been seriously challenged by the discovery of considerable divergence of belief between, and more especially, within these socio-religious communities.⁸ Given considerable differences among Protestants over basic beliefs, it is misleading to refer to Protestantism as though it represented a unified block of denominations:

While Protestant-Catholic contrasts are often large enough to be notable, although often, too, remarkably small, they seem inconsequential compared to the differences found among the Protestant groups. Indeed, the data indicate that the overall impression of American Protestantism produced when members of all denominations are treated as a single group at best bears resemblance to only a few actual denominations making up the Protestant collectivity. (9)

As an alternative to the tripartite model of Herberg, Stark and Glock put forward a model of the American religious system which is divided into four Protestant orthodoxy groups (liberals, moderates, conservatives and fundamentalists) and the Roman Catholic group. Criticism of Herberg suggests that Herberg placed too much confidence in the evidence of a post-war religious revival, underestimated the significance of sectarian religion and overestimated the degree of doctrinal homogeneity within the Protestant denominations. The consequence of such criticism is to place restrictions on the scope of the thesis rather than to demolish its whole structure. In its restricted form, the thesis can be said to be operative in the case of the accommodation of liberal and moderate Protestant denominations to the values of the American Way of Life. Such denominations, while they have not maintained a high level of recruitment, have preserved their relevance to the central institutions and values of American society at the cost of secularization of their traditional, orthodox bases. Despite restrictions in scope, the Herberg thesis, in a comparative perspective, still provides the most fruitful guideline for contrasting the nature of organized religion in different western societies.

While the inaccuracies of American data have proved a major obstacle/

obstacle to evaluating the Herberg thesis, the absence of any comprehensive British data has restricted the full utilization of Herberg's analysis. Comparisons between the two societies are either largely impressionistic or depend on data referring to church membership and attendance. Where attempts are made to contrast religious belief and knowledge, the results are frequently nugatory because of the substantial differences between sampling techniques and questionnaire schedules. However, with the development of a comprehensive definition of religious commitment which has interdenominational applicability a channel has been opened through which comparative research may be initiated.¹⁰ The present chapter reports an attempt to utilize Glock and Stark's dimensions of religious commitment and their data on Californian church members to examine the Herberg thesis within a cross-cultural perspective.

Religious Practice

Weekly religious worship in church is a minimum token of religious practice among church members. Since church attendance is a highly visible activity, it is particularly subject to conformist activity, it is particularly subject to conformist pressures: religious worship is a social expectation. On the other hand, because religious organizations are socially marginal in modern Britain, some of the status-conferring functions of attendance have been minimized. For American adults, church worship is a sign of acceptance of common values, whereas in British society religion is socially signless. While this argument may not be relevant to adult groups of church adherents, it need not apply in full to church members. Among Yorkshire Methodists, seventy-four percent claimed to attend church worship weekly or more, but only fifty-one percent of Californian Methodists did so (Table 11:1). When samples of British and American adults are compared it is clear that Americans are more frequent worshippers, but when church members are examined the situation may well be reversed.

If public, formal religious practice is highly sensitive to social norms, informal, private devotion ought to be less sensitive. The expectation must be that while Americans are more likely to attend church, they are less likely than their British co-religionists to

practice religion in private. However, prayer has a popular vogue in impersonalized society.¹¹ Prayer itself has been highly evaluated for the "peace of mind" which it gives to the practitioner. Despite the current fashion of prayer in America, Yorkshire Methodists evaluate prayer significantly more than Californian Methodists. Nearly half of the British sample said that prayer was "extremely important" in their lives, but on thirty-nine percent of the American sample did so (Table 11:2). Another example of private devotion is, of course, Bible reading. Like prayer, this practice is less visible than church attendance and one would expect less influenced by conformist norms. Again marked differences were found: fifty-two percent of the Yorkshire sample and twenty-nine percent of the Californian sample may be described as Bible readers (Table 11:3).

Some of the difference in terms of church attendance between American and British adults may be explained by reference to the pressures for conforming to the American Way of Life. One would expect the pressure of these social norms to show up in a comparison of church members cross-culturally. It would be reasonable to assume, for example, that while American church members were more regularly in church, British church members would evaluate private prayer more highly and read their Bible more frequently. No difference between these items occurred. Instead, Yorkshire Methodists are significantly more committed on all three items.¹²

Religious Belief

Herberg has argued that theological precision has been less important in American religion than the emphasis on activism and pragmatism. Other writers have acknowledged this difference:

The premisses of Methodism make dogma subordinate to life, not indeed disparaging dogma, since in the long run it is likely to have serious effect upon life, but holding it distinctly subordinate to the promotion of love and righteousness in the individual and brotherhood.(13)

Although theological exactitude is disparaged by the American Way of Life, belief in God is basic.

What do Americans believe? Most emphatically, they "believe in God": 97 percent according to one survey, 96 percent according to another, 95 percent according to a third.(14)

As Glöck and Stark have frequently pointed out, however, Gallup Poll results fail to measure the saliency with which such beliefs are held. Thus, among Californian Methodists, while disbelief is marginal, only sixty-percent had "no doubts" about their belief in God. Furthermore, one would expect that, given a basic theism in the American Way of Life, Californian Methodists would hold more salient beliefs in God than would Yorkshire Methodists. However, while both groups are almost identical in their pattern of belief in God, Yorkshire Methodists are more confident theists. Sixty-three percent had no doubts about the existence of God and only five percent believed in a "higher

power of some kind" (Table 11:4).

While British and American Methodists are similar in the extent to which they believe in the existence of God, on other beliefs, where the social pressures to believe are less forceful, British Methodists are significantly more orthodox than their American counterparts. Thus, among Yorkshire Methodists sixty-nine percent had no doubt about the divinity of Jesus, but only fifty-four percent of Californian Methodists held this belief to the same degree of saliency. (Table 11:5) Furthermore, twenty percent of Californian Methodists held some form of belief in Jesus as "just a man". Similarly, fifty-nine percent of Yorkshire Methodists believed in life after death as "completely true", but only forty-nine percent of Californian Methodists did so (Table 11:6).

While Americans believe emphatically in God, the American Way of Life stresses activism rather than creeds:

The American Way of Life is individualistic, dynamic, pragmatic. It affirms the supreme value and dignity of the individual; it stresses incessant activity on his part, for he is always to be striving to "get ahead"; it defines an ethic of self-reliance, merit and character, and judges by achievement: "deeds, not creeds" are what count. (15)

In such a culture, the weight of salvation is on the individual's shoulders: salvation is less a gift and more of an achievement. Consequently, the doctrine of salvation by faith alone is denigrated in

favour of more activist interpretations. There are significant differences between Californian and Yorkshire Methodists over what is held to be "absolutely necessary" for salvation. While forty-five percent of Californian Methodists held that belief in "Jesus Christ as Saviour" was absolutely necessary, seventy-four percent of Yorkshire Methodists believed that ritual, such as Holy Communion, was more significant than Californian Methodists. On the other hand, Californian Methodists believed that of all three types of salvation requirement, works ("Doing good for others") was the most important. In a comparative perspective, American Methodists believe that deeds, not creeds are religiously significant, but British Methodists hold to creeds, not deeds.

Religious Experience

British Methodism and its American offshoot were notorious for the emotionalism of their field-preaching and camp-meetings. However, with denominationalization and social accommodation, the emotionalism of its preaching and the experiential component of its theology were curtailed. While one would expect intense religious experiences to be absent in denominations, milder religious experiences are fairly common. The most frequent and least intense religious experience has been termed the "confirming experience", which is a sudden feeling or awareness that one's beliefs are true.¹⁶ While only a minority have

not had confirming experiences ("A feeling of being in the presence of God"), British Methodists were significantly more likely to report such experiences (Table 11:8). Turning to more intense forms of experience, the responsive type is defined as an experience in which the actor has not only an awareness of the presence of the Divine but feels this awareness as reciprocal. Experience of sanctioning experiences, a subtype of responsive experiences, rare in both churches and no difference occurred between the two samples. In both, a tenth of the respondents were sure they had had a "feeling of being punished by God". British and American Methodists experience God as a benign figure and, if God is not exactly dead, He has ceased to be a threatening figure. The second subtype of responsive experiences, the salvational, is particularly interesting in the study of Methodism. Conversion was a sign of the individual's release from the powers of sin and a token of superior religious status¹⁷. However, with religious routinization conversion becomes less important as the denomination recruits the majority of its membership from its inherited membership. In both churches only a minority can be said to have had salvational experiences. However, Yorkshire Methodists were significantly more likely to report a feeling of being "saved in Christ".

Summary and Discussion

X Regardless of the criticism which has been levelled at Herberg's thesis, Protestant-Catholic-Jew has remained a classic of American sociology. Despite its relevance to an understanding of the differences between British and American religion, little specific research has yet been initiated in Britain to explore these differences. Systematic research would require substantial samples of church and non-church members from both societies. However, when British and American Methodist church members are compared, some interesting confirmations and problems of the Herberg thesis become evident.

Although religious practice is far more widespread in American society generally, a comparison of church members shows that British Methodists are more heavily committed than American Methodists. According to the Herberg thesis, one would expect American church members to be more publicly committed but less privately religious than British church members. However, it was found that Yorkshire Methodists not only went to church more regularly, but they used their Bible more systematically and evaluated prayer far more highly than Californian Methodists. Regardless of social norms of conformity in religious practice, British church members are more regular worshippers both publicly and privately.

In terms of Herberg's analysis of the Americanization of Christian beliefs, the data offer some important confirmations of the Herberg

thesis. While Americans are firmly committed to theistic beliefs, their values are essentially activist and pragmatic. Among liberal Protestants ethical behaviour counts for more than theological nicety. Although Yorkshire Methodists are firmer in their conviction that God exists than Californian Methodists, the statistically significant differences between the two samples were greatly increased on other items of orthodox Christianity. Yorkshire Methodists are more confident that Jesus is divine, that there is life after death than Californian Methodists. In terms of the requirements for salvation, Yorkshire Methodists believe that faith comes first, whereas Californian Methodists hold that works are more important.

Finally, although Herberg failed to relate religious experience to the American Way of Life in any theoretically significant way, he did assume that denominationalism was sociologically inconsistent with revivalism. Consequently, intense religious experiences tend to be pushed to the periphery of society, namely towards the sects. In British society, the same process of emotional routinization has taken place, but Yorkshire Methodists are more likely to report confirming and salvational experiences. However, in both churches sanctioning experiences are rare.

Until adequate surveys of adults in both British and American societies are undertaken no complete confirmation or rejection of the

Herberg thesis is possible. Existing data support the view that American religious beliefs are highly secularized by their accommodation to the American Way of Life. When church members are compared, Methodists in Britain are more committed on three dimensions of religion, practice, belief and experience, than Methodists in America. However, a more detailed inspection of the data shows that the Herberg thesis can be supported. By comparison with Yorkshire Methodists, Californians adhere to a this-worldly activism which minimizes the importance of faith and the likelihood of direct religious experience. While British Methodism plays no important function in the maintenance of national values and institutions, British Methodists are more fully committed to orthodox Christianity than their American counterparts.

Chapter 11.References

- (1) W. Herberg Protestant-Catholic-Jew, New York: Anchor Books, 1960, p.77.
- (2) *ibid.*, p.81.
- (3) For a discussion of this problem, cf. N. Demerath and P. Hammond Religion in Social Context, New York: Random House, 1969, p.119 ff.
- (4) Cf. M. Argyle Religious Behaviour, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958, p.23 ff.
- (5) For various interpretations of the trends, cf. Argyle, *ibid.*, S. Lipset "Religion in America: What Religious Revival?" Columbia University Forum, 11:2, 1959.
- (6) B. Wilson "An Analysis of Sect Development", American Sociological Review, Vol.24, February, 1959, pp.3-15.
- (7) An interesting analysis of this process is to be found in B. Johnson "Do Holiness Sects Socialize in Dominant Values?", Social Forces, Vol.39, May 1961, pp.309-316.
- (8) These findings were reported in R. Stark and C.Y. Glock "The New Denominationalism", Review of Religious Research, Vol.7, No.1, Fall 1965, pp.8-17.
- (9) *ibid.*, p.16.
- (10) C.Y. Glock "On the Study of Religious Commitment", Review of Recent Research Bearing on Religious and Character, research supplement to Religious Education, July-August 1962, New York: Religious Education Association, pp.68-110.
- (11) For an analysis of recent devotional literature, cf. L. Schneider and S. Dornbush "Inspirational Literature: From Latent to Manifest Functions of Religion" American Journal of Sociology, Vol. LXII, No.5, March 1957, pp.476-481.

- (12) Unfortunately it proved impossible or irrelevant to use other items on private and public worship. In certain cases, Stark and Glock have reported their data in such a way as to preclude direct comparisons. For example, on frequency of prayer, it was found that sixty-three percent of Californian Methodists pray "At least once a week or more", but forty-six percent of Yorkshire Methodists pray "regularly once a day or more".
- (13) J. Faulkner "The Methodist Episcopal and Other Churches" in W. Townsend (et al.) A New History of Methodism, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909, p.151.
- (14) Herberg, op.cit., p.72.
- (15) *ibid.*, p.79.
- (16) This taxonomy of religious experience was first published in R. Stark "A Taxonomy of Religious Experience", Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Vol.V, No.1 1965, pp.97-116.
- (17) For a discussion of the status implications of conversion cf. M. Weber The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (trans. T. Parsons), London: Unwin University Books, 1965, p.141 ff.

Table 11:1

Religious Practice: Sunday Worship
(Percentage)

	Methodist Church Members	
	California	Yorkshire
Nearly weekly or better.	51	74
At least once a month.	26	14
At least once a year.	16	10
Less than once a year.	4	2
N.	415	342

$p < .001$

Table 11:2

Religious Practice: Evaluation of Importance of Prayer
(Percentage)

	Methodist Church Members	
	California	Yorkshire
Extremely important.	39	48
Fairly important.	39	41
Not too/ not important.	17	10
N.	415	342

$p < .001$

Table 11:3

Religious Practice: Frequency of Bible
Reading at Home (Percentage)

	Methodist Church Members	
	California	Yorkshire
Once a day or more/At least once a week.	11	21
Quite often but not, regularly.	18	31
% Bible Readers	29	52
Seldom	37	29
Rarely or never.	34	16
N.	415	342

$p < .001$

Table 11:4

Religious Belief: The Existence of God
(Percentage)

	Methodist church members	
	California	Yorkshire
I know that God really exists and I have no doubts about it.	60	63
Whilst I have doubts, I feel I do believe in God./I find myself believing in God some of the time but not at other times.	26	29
I don't believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power of some kind.	11	5
N.	415	342

$p < .01$

Table 11:5

Religious Belief: The Divinity of Jesus
(Percentage)

	Methodist Church Members	
	California	Yorkshire
Jesus is the Divine Son of God and I have no doubts about it.	54	69
Whilst I have some doubts, I feel basically that Jesus is Divine.	22	17
I feel that Jesus was a great man and very holy, but I don't feel him to be the Son of God any more than all of us are children of God./I think Jesus was only a man, although an extraordinary one.	20	9
N.	415	342

$p < .001$

Table 11:6

Religious Belief: Life after Death
(Percentage)

	Methodist Church Members	
	California	Yorkshire
Completely true	49	59
Probably true	35	28
Probably not true./ Definitely not true	13	8
N.	415	342

$p < .001$

Table 11:7

Religious Belief: Requirements for Salvation
(Percentage)

"Absolutely necessary"	Methodist Church Members	
	California	Yorkshire
<u>Faith</u> : "Belief in Jesus Christ as Saviour".	45	74
<u>Works</u> : "Doing good for others".	57	59
<u>Ritual</u> : "Regular par- ticipation in Christian Sacraments for example, Holy Communion".	10	31
N.	415	342

p < .001

Table 11:8

Religious Experience: Confirming and Responsive Types
(Percentage)

	Methodist Church Members	
	California	Yorkshire
<u>Confirming</u>		
Yes, I'm sure I have.	36	49
Yes, I think I have.	34	33
No.	24	13
p < .001		
<u>Responsive (sanction)</u>		
Yes, I'm sure I have.	11	10
Yes, I think I have.	20	20
Not significant		
<u>Responsive (salvation)</u>		
Yes, I'm sure I have.	18	29
Yes, I think I have.	28	27
p < .001		
N.	415	342

Chapter 12The Decline of Methodism - conclusion

Until comparatively recently The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism was treated as Weber's main contribution to the sociology of religion. For decades, scholarly debate centred on the contribution, if any, of Calvinist Protestantism to European economic development. The indications are that a broader appreciation of Weber's contribution is beginning to emerge among sociologists working in the field of religious studies. Eisenstadt has argued that in order to incorporate the full force of parochial studies of diverse aspects of Protestantism to analyses of the transformative power of religion in a comparative perspective.¹ Furthermore, the transformative capacity of religion must be treated and examined in a wide range of social situations and not merely in economic sectors. The diversity of Weber's interests and influence has been indicated by contemporary discussion of the notion of "theodicy".² One consequence of these developments has been that the traditional division between Marx and Weber is difficult to support; Weber was far more "structuralist" and Marxist than has been customarily assumed.³ Despite the deepening appreciation of the stature of Weber, little reference has been made to Weber's distinction between "virtuoso"

and "mass" religion in either the traditional or modern literature on Weber.⁴ While sociologists and their audiences are familiar with the theory of the routinization of charisma, little attention has been drawn to the related notion of the "massification" of virtuoso religion. Finally, this is not a trivial omission because the concept of virtuoso religion was an important foundation of Weber's comparative sociology and his view of secularization.⁵

The potential contribution of the distinction between virtuoso and mass religion is considerable. It pinpoints the inevitable stratification of religious systems wherever there is any intensive drive for salvation which requires either systematic withdrawal from or systematic engagement in the world. For Weber, the classic example of such stratification occurred in Hinayana Buddhism. Wherever an attempt is made to extend the religion of an elite to the masses, a range of developments is possible. The standards of the elite may become modified, the mass may redefine the pristine traditions so that they become compatible with everyday needs or the two traditions of an indigenous mass religion and a literate, "heroic" religion may continue side by side.⁶ The preservation of virtuoso religion requires severe standards of admission, adequate supplies of resources from some lay group or at least low involvement in labour and routine tasks and a high degree of internal discipline. Even with these safeguards, the

quality of virtuoso religion may become routinized, conventional and stale. The charismatic quality of the virtuoso can become imitated and learnt through formal channels of education. Charisma, virtuosity and sectarianism are highly fragile social phenomena because they are threatened by the very worldliness which they seek to curb.

An important aspect of Weberian sociology as a whole and of the virtuoso-mass dichotomy in particular is that they act as safeguards against any predilection for mere head counting in sociological research. All too often sociologists in prusuit of substantiation of some theory of secularization rest content with measures of how many have stopped believing in God, how many have stopped going to church or of how little time is allocated to religion by television and radio. Weber's treatment of virtuoso religion points to the irrelevance of much sociological research to the decline of religion. Historically, it has been rare or impossible for a religious style which involves serious, dedicated and total commitment to become the style of the majority of persons. By definition, absolute commitment to a path to salvation rules out engagement with mundane needs of economic familial and social life. For this reason, the concept of virtuoso religion forces the sociologists to attempt a qualitative rather than merely quantitative assessment of religion.

A policy of head counting has been especially pernicious in the sociological study of religious belief. While religious belief may be held to be the central core of religious commitment among certain branches of Protestantism, emphasis on proper beliefs has not been characteristic of the whole Christian tradition and certainly not characteristic of religion as such. It hardly needs saying, of course, that Christianity itself has not voluntarily agreed upon some common and binding notion of "orthodoxy". Proper belief has frequently been suspect as an indication of holiness mainly because belief is the easiest thing to fake. In Islam, the tax on non-Muslims was a fairly powerful motivation for belief and reformist energies of Islamic ascetics and mystics have for centuries been directed at both luxury and artificial, conformist assent to orthodoxy. Many religious movements which react against religious intellectualism have contained some indifference to conventional orthodoxy. Zen Buddhism rejected the intellectual element in both main branches of Buddhism and declared that intuition was a better path to enlightenment. In the Christian tradition, the Quaker emphasis on the "inner light" and the Methodist on "assurance" were examples of indifference to formal orthodoxy.

A rather similar set of problems emerges in the consideration of religious practice and experience. To some extent, virtuoso styles

of religious practice are synonymous with frequency of worship. On the face of it, the virtuoso worship more frequently, take the sacraments more regularly, pray and fast more than the mass. Speaking of Islamic virtuoso religion, Arberry noted that

This dhikr is a general practice in Islam and not confined to the Sufi orders. What may be said to distinguish them from others in this respect is the length and regularity of their recitations. (7)

The same could be said of the Methodist societies with the eighteenth century Church of England. While fasting, prayer and communion were general practices in Anglicanism, what distinguished Methodists from others was their fervour and regularity of communion, prayer and church attendance. This was one reason why Methodism was defined as "Christianity in earnest".⁸ Unfortunately this dimension of religion can become extremely problematic. While the full recipe of virtuoso practice is never accepted on a wide social scale, the more elementary features, such as public worship, are frequently manipulated as symbols of social status. Religiosity becomes a buttress of social position and, as Berger once remarked, such successful persons consume religion with the same alacrity that they consume filet mignon.

Whereas traditionally the middle class have often used religious practice as a public demonstration of their inherent respectability, deprived groups have found in religious experience and emotionalism

an outlet for their deprivations. The Aldersgate conversion gave Wesley certainty of salvation; the glossalalia of later Methodists became an escape from the dull and harsh routine of industrialism. Like religious practice and religious belief, conversion could be taken as a sign of social and psychological status. The fact of conversion demonstrated to others that the convert was free from sin and hence free from social disapproval.

Different religious traditions give different emphases to different aspects of religious commitment; therefore, it is not possible to stipulate any central dimension of religion which will be true of all religions.⁹ Different dimensions of religion have different meanings in different social situations; therefore, the decline of belief may indicate that orthodoxy has ceased to be socially prestigious rather than that orthodoxy has ceased to be meaningful.¹⁰ In analyzing the decline of religious commitment in Methodism as a process from virtuoso to mass religiosity, both of these problems have been crucial.

In its original form, Wesleyanism had many characteristics which may be legitimately described as those of virtuoso religion. On the devotional side, Wesley established norms of regular fasting, constant communion, Bible study and regular prayer. In terms of belief,

Methodism can be seen as a reaction against an over-emphasis on the intellectual nature of religion. While the statement needs qualification on details, Wesley treated orthodox belief as irrelevant to holiness and assurance. Rather Methodism pushed the search for certainty and security back onto personal experience. They systematic, indeed "methodistic" search for perfection created a tendency for hierarchical groups in early Methodism which were organized in terms of imputed perfection. In its original form, Methodism depended upon strict standards of internal control which were administered by the bands and classes. A constant vigil was kept for those who were called "disorderly walkers". However, an Arminian theology, successful evangelization, the death of Wesley and the increasing power of local, wealthy Methodists gradually undermined the devotional and ritual standards of Methodism. In later decades the Methodist ethics of work and leisure were also changed or abandoned in accordance with status and occupational requirements. Nothing more adequately describes this aspect of Methodist decline than Wesley's own prophetic words:

I fear, wherever riches have increased,
the essence of religion has decreased
in the same proportion. Therefore I do
not see how it is possible, in the nature
of things, for any revival of true religion
to continue long.

If Methodist decline can be explained in terms of the incompatibility

between an elitist or heroic religiosity and the mundane requirements of artisans, business men and merchants, the decline may be seen in the related problem of the changing relationship between the three main dimensions of religion.

At the beginning of this thesis, certain theoretically important relationships between religious belief, experience and ritual were outlined. Ritual embodies and expresses fundamental doctrines and in so doing reinforces them in the experience of the actor. Both ritual and belief represent related attempts to cope with the human predicament; their main function is to create and preserve a meaningful reality. It was, however, also noted that in certain circumstances religious ritual and belief can generate anxiety just as much as allay it. Into this traditional framework of ritual and belief, an attempt was made to locate religious experience. Following Durkheim, it was asserted that to some extent religious experience can be seen as a consequence of involvement in religious ritual. Religious practice heightens and dramatizes human mood and emotion; it can be said to act as an invitation to religious experience. However, religious experience was also seen to have powerful and dynamic consequences for religion and society. Normally religious ritual acts as a channel down which emotion may flow unhindered. In times of acute crisis, it may be that existing religious means are inadequate as expressions of human need and deprivation. In such periods, new

beliefs and practices are developed or adopted. The Ghost Dance, Indian Bhakti sects, Sufism and Methodism to a greater or lesser extent contain an important element of this emotional overflow leading to innovations in belief and practice. Interestingly Bhakti, Sufism and Methodism were all in one respect reactions against a cold intellectualism in religion and become vehicles for social groups suffering some form of relative deprivation.

While religious experience may have this radical impact on religious movements, it also has the generally conservative function of confirming and supporting religious belief. Religious experience offers some direct, frequently dramatic, evidence of a realm outside the world of day-to-day events. While this conservative function of experience is often officially encouraged by religious groups, the more intimate, possibly radical, types of communication with God are less encouraged.

The stress laid on and the relations between these three aspects of religious commitment vary from one religious group to another. Within religious traditions, these inter-relationships are changing over time to meet different needs, circumstances and social groups. To assert that any one dimension has primacy is to create a static and unimaginative approach to the study of religious phenomena. In the case of Methodism, for example, the significance of formal belief was underplayed in favour of personal experience and rigorous devotion.

The Methodist stress on religious experience, however, became a useful vehicle through which deprived groups could express and partly relieve their hardships. Because of the danger of anti-nomianism, the leaders of the main Methodist denominations were forced to curb conversion exuberance and emotionalism. In addition, the ritualism of early Methodism was substantially reduced so that the occasions of religious experience - Watchnight, Lovefeast, fasting, field-preaching events - became limited. As ritual and experience were circumscribed, so the evidential basis of belief was narrowed and looking at this process in reverse, as certain beliefs which were associated with salvational experiences - Original Sin, Heaven and Hell, Christ's Salvation of man - were abandoned, so the theological framework for conversion was removed. The social background to these religious changes was the gradual elimination of many of the physical and social deprivations upon which religious emotionalism had rested. If the decline of Methodist commitment may be seen as a shift in orientation from virtuoso to mass religion and as a routinization of early religious innovation, then the change in Methodist religious organization was largely parallel.

The debate over the adequacy of the Church - sect typology has raised many problems and few solutions. The same may be said of the attempts to classify Methodism in typological terms. Attempts to

define Methodism as originally a sect, or religious order or denomination leave something to be desired. Part of the problem has been that sociologists have been assuming a typological purity which is not present in this particular empirical case and observations that Methodism inherited "Church-type traits" from the beginning do not really solve the matter. Indeed, it is this very mixture in Methodist organization and theology which calls for analysis rather than obfuscation behind further types.

Most sociologists have agreed that, whatever the terminological difficulties, early Wesleyanism was characterized by a highly developed discipline, oversight and control. These characteristics have been described variously as those of a religious order, sect, sect with mixed Church-type features and, in this thesis, as High Methodism. It may be said that a religious movement of this nature was constituted to promote and protect virtuous commitment. It guaranteed that the imperfections of Methodist converts would be ironed out by the internal system of discipline. The band and class systems insulated Methodism against the impact of "disorderly walkers", against the inroads of mass religiosity. At the same time, a great deal of power and influence was vested in the hands of local laymen. Class leaders, local preachers, Sunday school teachers and trustees were all lay roles. After Wesley's death, the dichotomy between High and Low

Methodism was sharply demarcated by the numerous schisms away from Wesleyanism. The common theme running through these secessions was a protest against Wesleyan centralism, a protest which was associated both with the doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers" and the doctrine of democratic freedom. The result of these internal conflicts was to weaken Methodism both internally and externally. It has been estimated, for example, that one hundred thousand members left Wesleyanism between 1850 and 1855 over the so-called Fly Sheet controversy.

If losses from membership resulting from domestic conflict offer some explanation of Methodist decline in the nineteenth century, the long-term problem of membership has been the inability to recruit sufficient numbers of new members to offset losses by death and "ceased to meet". The double implication of the decline of the emphasis on conversion was that belief became less certain and membership became more a question of inheritance than salvation. In part, this stress on family, kinship and fellowship represents a continuity of the Methodist tradition. In Methodism, "fellowship" and "family religion" are used almost interchangeably and

The first Methodists were distinguished for many things, but nothing more became them than their "sense of family", developed in their fellowship meetings but originated in their homes.(11)

The Methodist family and fellowship meeting provided a point of stability and welcome for in-coming converts. By and large this stability has not been lost and the Methodist chapel is a place where friends and kin meet, rather than a gathering of complete strangers. The important change is that the influx of converts has been reduced to a trickle. Methodism has come to rely almost entirely on recruitment from inherited memberships through family training and marriage. Other sources of training, Sunday school, day school and youth organizations, have been gradually weakened so that family training has become crucial. At the same time that the means for training have been declining, methods of disciplining members have all but disappeared. Bands, classes, visits from reprimanding class leaders, expulsions and punitive forays into the Connexion are now a thing of the past. One might say that the need for oversight and watchfulness disappeared with virtuoso religion and where standards have been generally relaxed there can be few grounds for expelling members.

While the focus of interest in the thesis has been on changing styles of religious orientation, an obvious consequence of these changes has been a numerical decline in membership. However favourable the social conditions may be for the rapid growth of religious movements, growth must depend in part on the willingness of believers

to persuade, to propagandize and to convert others to join the movement. Because the preparedness to convert others is now largely absent among the laity, evangelism is the preserve of specialists so that denominational growth depends mainly on family socialization or on a small group of trained evangelists or on lateral, ecumenical growth.

The self-confident, aggressive evangelist of the nineteenth century has been replaced by the conciliatory ecumenical negotiator of the twentieth century. Whatever the perfectly valuable theological reasons for church unity, a major case for ecumenism has been that it will improve organizational efficiency. A Methodist-Anglican unity would have allowed both sides to rationalize redundant churches and to minimize unnecessary competition. Apart from the difficulties which were experienced by the Anglican Church, ecumenism re-opened the crisis in Methodism between its two traditional polities of High and Low Methodism. The attempt to achieve an inter-organizational dissensus which for a period after 1963 threatened to tear Methodism apart. Whether or not the events of the last seven years will precipitate Methodist decline remains to be seen.

Dr. Kent once commented that

Methodism might be labelled a Holiness Revival manqué, that as such the movement virtually died in the 1760's. (12)

One is tempted to say that the pessimistic import of Weber's sociology of religion was that virtuoso religion is normally more or less manqué. An exacting, comprehensive concentration on holiness, perfection, detachment or illumination requires some degree of freedom from the necessities of family, work and society. The exceptions to this rule are rare.¹³ While the core of virtuosity is particularly difficult to preserve in any religious movement, in Methodism the virtuoso standards have never been entirely lost sight of. The current ecumenical crisis has paradoxically demonstrated this virtuoso theme. The majority of Methodist members follow a mass religious style, but this very laxity encourages the emergence of reformist groups. While High and Low protest groups have totally disagreed over ecumenical policy, principles of church organization and over basic Methodist traditions, there has been an underlying agreement that devotional and theological standards have grown particularly lax. Both the dissenting groups and the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship have attempted to stiffen devotional and ritual norms, encourage more frequent Bible study and prayer, invigorate worship. Furthermore, both High and Low wings of modern Methodism have criticized the erosion of precise theological standards.

Methodism remains one of the most complex and heterogeneous religious movements of modern times. The Methodist synthesis of

various traditions - Catholic and Protestant, Primitive Church and Reformation - and various forms of organization defy simply classification and make any attempt to trace its decline complex and involved. Faced with this diversity, the sociologist is forced to abstract from the empirical complexities certain issues which he defines as crucial. In selecting two central issues of religious commitment and religious organization, the intention has been to analyze issues which Methodists themselves would regard as critical aspects of religious decline. The decline of virtuoso religion and the continuance of a High-Low Methodist split seem to capture much of what has been at the core of Methodist history.

Chapter 12References

- (1) For various attempts to locate the Weber thesis in its broadest perspective, cf. S.N. Eisenstadt (ed.) The Protestant Ethic and Modernization: a comparative view, New York: Basic Books, 1968.
- (2) The concept of "theodicy" plays an important part in P.L. Berger The Social Reality of Religion, London: Faber and Faber, 1969. For a critique of Weber's use of theodicy, cf. G. Obeyesekere "Theodicy, Sin and Salvation in a Sociology of Buddhism" in E.R. Leach (ed.) Dialectic in Practical Religion, London: Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp.7-40.
- (3) A short but informative introduction to Weber is to be found in N. Birnbaum and G. Lenzer (eds.) Sociology and Religion: a Book of Readings, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969, introduction pp.1-16.
- (4) A brief discussion of the religion of the masses occurred in R. Bendix Max Weber: an Intellectual Portrait, New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1962.
- (5) While the religion of the "masses" and of the "virtuosi" are slightly indexed in Weber's main works on comparative religion, this undervalues the real importance of this distinction. For example, Weber thought that the virtuoso style of Hinayana Buddhism prevented the development of adequate lay organizations with the result that Hinayana Buddhism was incapable of resisting the impact of Hindu sects and Islam (Max Weber The Religion of India; the Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism (trans. and edited by H.H. Gerth and D. Martindale), New York: Free Press, 1967, p.233 ff). In The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism (trans. and edited by H.H. Gerth), New York: Macmillan, 1964, ch.7, Weber utilized the notion of "the religious needs of the masses" to account for the development of Taoism and Mahayana Buddhism in the face of official Confucian opposition.

(6) For a discussion of this issue in a Buddhist context, cf. G. Obeyesekere "The Great and Little Tradition in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism", Journal of Asian Studies, Vol.22, 1963, pp.139-155.

(7) M. Lings "Suffism" in A.J. Arberry (ed.) Religion in the Middle East, London: Cambridge Press, 1969, Vol.2, p.259.

(8) Chalmer's definition quoted in W.J. Townsend (et al.) A New History of Methodism, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909, Vol.1, p.277.

(9) It is for this reason that much of Stark and Glock's discussion of the universality of the postulated dimensions of religion is in fact both culturally and denominationally specific.

(10) Of course some sociologists would want to take the loss of social influence and prestige as a religious decline. To some extent this position confuses this issue since normally one wants to view the compromise of the church with society as a loss of religious authenticity. It seems more plausible to treat social influence and religious authenticity as, at least initially, separate issues. While they need not be connected, the loss of social power may lead to a loss of plausibility and to inroads into religious consciousness.

(11) L. Church The Early Methodist People, London: Epworth Press, 1948, p.222.

(12) J. Kent The Age of Disunity, London: Epworth Press, 1966, p.IX.

(13) One exception to this rule may be so-called lineage sainthood in Islam; cf. E. Gellner "Sanctity, Puritanism, Secularization and Nationalism in North Africa. A Case Study" Archives de Sociologie des Religions, Vol.15, 1963, pp.71-87.

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Appendix 1.

The Questionnaire

and

Follow-up Letters

<p>To begin with we would like to ask you about your present church going and about your religious activities generally.</p>	
<p>1. For how many years have you been a member of the Methodist Church?</p>	<p>_____ yrs.</p>
<p>2. Have you ever been a member of another denomination?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
<p>3. How often do you attend Sunday worship services?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Every week <input type="checkbox"/> Nearly every week <input type="checkbox"/> About three times a month <input type="checkbox"/> About twice a month <input type="checkbox"/> About once a month <input type="checkbox"/> About every six weeks <input type="checkbox"/> About every three months <input type="checkbox"/> About once or twice a year <input type="checkbox"/> Never</p>
<p>4. Do you attend morning or evening worship services or both?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Morning <input type="checkbox"/> Evening <input type="checkbox"/> Both</p>

<p>5. How often do you receive Holy Communion?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Every Month</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Every three months</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Every six months</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Every year</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Less than once a year</p>
<p>6. What is your main reason for belonging to Methodism? (Tick only one answer)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I was brought up in it.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I prefer Methodist worship.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I agree with the principles of the Methodist Church.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I like the friendly atmosphere.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I was converted to it.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Methodism is the true Church.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> My wife/husband and children are Methodists.</p>
<p>7. Have you ever personally tried to convert someone to your religious faith?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, often.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a few times.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, once or twice.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No, never.</p>
<p>8. How important would you say your church membership is to you?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Extremely important.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Quite important.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fairly important.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not too important.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fairly important.</p>

<p>9. In an average week, how many evenings do you spend in church, such as fellowship groups, which may not actually meet in the church building?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 4</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 7</p>
<p>10. If you have ever been married, please answer the following questions (if you have been married more than once, answer for your most recent spouse).</p> <p>To what denomination does (or did) your spouse belong?</p> <p>In what denomination was your spouse raised?</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>(denomination)</p> <p>_____</p> <p>(denomination)</p>
<p>11. Of your five closest friends, how many are members of your congregation?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 4</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
<p>12. Turning now to other religious activities besides attending church, how often, if at all, are table prayers or grace said before or after meals in your home?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> We say grace at all meals.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> We say grace at least once a day.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> We say grace at least once a week.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> We say grace on special occasions.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> We never, or hardly ever say grace.</p>

13. How often do you read the Bible at home?

- I never or hardly ever read the Bible.
- I read it regularly once a day or more.
- I read it regularly several times a week.
- I read it regularly once a week.
- I read it quite often but not at regular intervals.
- I read it once in a while.
- I read it on special occasions.

14. Thinking of your daily life and the decisions you have to make constantly about how to spend your time, how to act with other people and so on, to what extent does what you read in the Bible help you in making everyday decisions in your life?

- To be honest, I hardly ever think of the Bible and what it has to say about daily life.
- While I can't think of specific examples, nevertheless I feel sure that the Bible is still of help in my daily life.
- I can think of specific times when it has helped me in a very direct way in making decisions in life.
- Other (please specify)
-
-
-

15. Now I would like to ask you about prayer. Prayer is a very private thing, but I hope you will not find the questions too delicate to answer.

How often do you pray privately? (Tick the answer which comes closest to what you do).

- I never pray, or only do so at church.
- I pray only on special occasions.
- I pray once in a while, but not at regular intervals.
- I pray quite often, but not at regular intervals.
- I pray regularly once a day or more.
- I pray several times a week.
- I pray regularly once a week.

16. How important is prayer in your life?

- Extremely important.
- Fairly important.
- Not too important.
- Not important.

17. Do you feel your prayers are answered?

- Yes, I have no doubt they are.
- I feel they are but I'm not entirely sure.
- I don't feel they really are.
- None of these represents what I feel. I feel that _____
- _____
- _____

<p>18. How often do you ask forgiveness for your sins?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Very often.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Quite often.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rarely.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Never.</p>
<p>19. How certain are you that your sins are forgiven?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I'm absolutely certain they are.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I'm fairly certain.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I feel they are forgiven, sometimes but not always.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am never quite sure whether my sins are forgiven or not.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I usually feel my sins are not forgiven.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I don't think of sin in this way.</p>
<p>We now turn to another part of religious life - religious belief. We are concerned to learn not only what people believe, but also how important their beliefs are to them. We hope that the questions will allow you to express your own belief. If not, would you make a comment next to any questions which you consider to be inappropriate.</p>	
<p>20. Which of the statements opposite comes closest to expressing what you believe about God? (Tick only one answer).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I know that God really exists and I have no doubts about it.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at other times.</p>

20. Contd./

- I don't believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a higher power of some kind.
- I don't know whether there is a God, and I don't believe there is any way to find out.
- I don't believe in God.
- None of the above represents what I feel. What I believe about God is _____
- _____
- _____

21. Which of the statements opposite comes closest to what you believe about Jesus? (Tick only one answer)

- Jesus is the Divine Son of God and I have no doubts about it.
- While I have some doubts about it, I feel basically that Jesus is Divine.
- I feel that Jesus was a great man and very holy, but I don't feel Him to be the Son of God any more than all of us are children of God.
- I think Jesus was only a man, although an extraordinary one.
- Frankly, I'm not sure there really was such a person as Jesus.
- None of the above represents what I believe. What I believe is _____
- _____
- _____

<p>22. The Bible tells of many miracles some credited to Jesus and some to other prophets and apostles. Generally speaking, which of the statements opposite comes closest to what you believe about Bible miracles? (Tick only one answer).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> I am not sure whether these miracles really happened or not.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I believe miracles are stories and never really happened.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I believe the miracles happened, but can be explained by natural causes.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I believe the miracles happened just as the Bible says they did.</p>																												
<p>23. Would you think about each of the religious beliefs listed below and then indicate how certain you are that it is true in the appropriate bracket on the right.</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">Complete- ly true</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">Probably true</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">Probably true</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">Defin- itely not true</td> </tr> </table>	Complete- ly true	Probably true	Probably true	Defin- itely not true																								
Complete- ly true	Probably true	Probably true	Defin- itely not true																										
<p>There is life beyond death</p> <p>Jesus was born of a virgin.</p> <p>The Devil actually exists.</p> <p>Jesus was opposed to all drinking of alcohol.</p> <p>What we do in this life will determine our fate in the hereafter.</p> <p>Jesus walked on water</p> <p>Man cannot help doing evil.</p> <p>Contd./</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>																										

23. Contd./	Complete- ly true	Probably true	Probably true	Defin- itely not true
<p>The Pope is infallible in matters of morals and faith.</p> <p>A child is born into the world guilty of sin.</p> <p>Jesus was born a Jew</p>	<p>()</p> <p>()</p> <p>()</p>	<p>()</p> <p>()</p> <p>()</p>	<p>()</p> <p>()</p> <p>()</p>	<p>()</p> <p>()</p> <p>()</p>
<p>24. When you think of salvation, do you think primarily of being granted eternal life beyond the grave, or do you think of being released from sin and protected from evil in this life.</p>	<p>() I think primarily of being granted eternal life beyond the grave.</p> <p>() I think primarily of being released from sin and protected from evil in this life.</p> <p>() I don't think of either of these. What I believe about salvation is _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>			
<p>25. What do you think will happen to you after death?</p>	<p>I feel I probably will:</p> <p>() go to purgatory.</p> <p>() go to hell.</p> <p>() simply stop existing.</p> <p>() go to heaven.</p>			

<p>26. How certain do you feel about the answer you have just given?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Very certain.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fairly certain.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Not very certain.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fairly uncertain.</p>																																													
<p>27. Would you please read the list of items below and decide whether you think it is:</p> <p>a) absolutely necessary for salvation,</p> <p>b) probably will help in gaining salvation,</p> <p>c) probably has no influence on salvation.</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Absolutely Necessary</th> <th>Would probably help.</th> <th>Probably no Influence</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Belief in Jesus as Saviour</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Holy Baptism</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Membership in a Christian Church.</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Regular participation in Christian sacraments such as Holy Communion.</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Holding the Bible to be God's truth.</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prayer.</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Doing good for others,</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tithing.</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Being a member of your particular religious faith.</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Loving your neighbour.</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			Absolutely Necessary	Would probably help.	Probably no Influence	Belief in Jesus as Saviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Holy Baptism	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Membership in a Christian Church.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular participation in Christian sacraments such as Holy Communion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Holding the Bible to be God's truth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prayer.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Doing good for others,	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tithing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Being a member of your particular religious faith.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Loving your neighbour.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<p>28. Now looking at the list below, would you please indicate for each whether you think it will:</p> <p>a) definitely prevent salvation,</p> <p>b) may prevent salvation,</p> <p>c) probably has no influence on salvation.</p>			
	Definitely Prevent	Possibly Prevent	No Influence
Drinking liquor.	()	()	()
Breaking the Sabbath.	()	()	()
Being completely ignorant of Jesus, as might be the case for people living in other countries.	()	()	()
Taking the Lord's name in vain.	()	()	()
Being of the Jewish religion.	()	()	()
Marrying a non-Christian.	()	()	()
Discriminating against other races.	()	()	()
Being anti-Semitic	()	()	()
Being of the Hindu religion.	()	()	()
<p>So far we have asked you about your religious activities and beliefs. The next series of questions has to do with your religious experiences, that is, with what feelings you may have had which you would think of as religious.</p>			

<p>29. To begin with, would you describe any experience which you have had in your life which at the time you thought of as a distinctly religious experience?</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>																					
<p>30. Listed below are a number of experiences of a religious nature, which people have reported having. Since you have been an adult have you ever had any of these experiences and how sure are you that you have had it?</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>Yes, I'm Sure I have</p> </td> <td> <p>Yes, I Think I have</p> </td> <td> <p>No</p> </td> </tr> </table>				<p>Yes, I'm Sure I have</p>	<p>Yes, I Think I have</p>	<p>No</p>															
<p>Yes, I'm Sure I have</p>	<p>Yes, I Think I have</p>	<p>No</p>																				
<p>A feeling that you were somehow in the presence of God.</p> <p>A sense of being saved in Christ.</p> <p>A feeling of being afraid of God.</p> <p>A feeling of being punished by God for something you have done.</p> <p>A feeling of being tempted by the Devil.</p> <p>31. If you have answered "No" to all the questions on religious experience, do you feel it is possible for people to have religious experiences?</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td> <p>()</p> </td> <td> <p>()</p> </td> <td> <p>()</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>()</p> </td> <td> <p>()</p> </td> <td> <p>()</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>()</p> </td> <td> <p>()</p> </td> <td> <p>()</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>()</p> </td> <td> <p>()</p> </td> <td> <p>()</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>() Yes</p> </td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>() No</p> </td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td> <p>() I'm not sure.</p> </td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	<p>()</p>	<p>()</p>	<p>()</p>	<p>()</p>	<p>()</p>	<p>()</p>	<p>()</p>	<p>()</p>	<p>()</p>	<p>()</p>	<p>()</p>	<p>()</p>	<p>() Yes</p>			<p>() No</p>			<p>() I'm not sure.</p>		
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<p>() Yes</p>																						
<p>() No</p>																						
<p>() I'm not sure.</p>																						

32. Thinking back over the answers you have given on religious experience, salvation, the nature of man and God, how sure are you that you have found the answers to the meaning and purpose of life?

- I'm quite certain and I more or less grew up knowing these things.
- I am quite certain, although at one time I was pretty uncertain.
- I am uncertain whether or not I have found them.
- I don't really believe there are answers to these questions.

Now we want to turn to some other aspects of religion - the different denominations of Christianity. Below are a series of questions concerning Christian denominations. Please decide how you feel about these statements.

33. It would have been better for Christianity if the split between Protestants and Catholics had never occurred.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Uncertain

34. It was a pity the Methodists had to leave the Anglican Church.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Uncertain

35. How do you feel about the future of the Protestant churches in Great Britain?

- They will probably gain more and more influence.
- They will probably continue about the same.
- They will probably lose some influence.

35. Contd./	<input type="checkbox"/> They will probably grow rather weak.
36. How do you feel about the future of the Roman Catholic Church in Great Britain?	<input type="checkbox"/> They will probably gain more and more influence. <input type="checkbox"/> They will probably continue about the same. <input type="checkbox"/> They will probably lose some influence. <input type="checkbox"/> They will probably grow rather weak.
37. How do you feel about the future of people who do not believe in God in Great Britain?	<input type="checkbox"/> They will probably gain more and more influence. <input type="checkbox"/> They will probably continue about the same. <input type="checkbox"/> They will probably lose some influence. <input type="checkbox"/> They will probably grow rather weak.
38. How do you feel about the proposed union between the Methodist Church and the Anglican Church?	<input type="checkbox"/> Complete union between the two churches is not desirable, since Methodism will just be swallowed up in Anglicanism. <input type="checkbox"/> Whilst union is desirable, it will make little difference to the problems of the church. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete union is desirable and will help the church fulfill its mission in society.

38. Contd./

() Complete union of the two churches is the will of God and ought to be accepted without reservations.

() Other _____

39. Below you will find a list of religions/faiths in alphabetical order. Will you order these starting with the most similar to Methodism and ending with the one which is least similar to Methodism?

- Anglican
- Atheist
- Baptist
- Catholic
- Congregational
- Jewish
- Mohammedan
- Presbyterian

_____ (most similar)

 _____ (least similar)

40. We would like you to imagine that, for some reason, you could no longer continue as a Methodist. Would you indicate for each of the churches listed, whether you would join, consider joining or not join? (Then would you circle the church you would be most likely to join and underline the church you would be least likely to join).

40. Contd./	Would Join	Consider Joining	Not Join	Don't Know
Catholic	()	()	()	()
Anglican	()	()	()	()
Congregational	()	()	()	()
Presbyterian	()	()	()	()
Baptist	()	()	()	()
Quaker	()	()	()	()
Mormons	()	()	()	()
Christian Science	()	()	()	()
Jehovah's Witnesses	()	()	()	()
41. Below is a list of things Protestants have said about Catholics and that Catholics have said about Protestants. For each statement, please indicate how you feel - do you feel it is true, tends to be true, tends to be false or is false?				
	True	Tends to be True	Tends to be False	False
Protestants attack Catholic beliefs without knowing anything about them.	()	()	()	()
Catholics stick to themselves and have as little to do with Protestants as possible	()	()	()	()

41. Contd./	True	Tends to be True	Tends to be false	False
Protestants take their religion less seriously than Catholics.	()	()	()	()
Catholics try to impose their religious beliefs on others.	()	()	()	()
Compared to Catholics Protestants do not oppose divorce as strongly as they should.	()	()	()	()
Catholics are lax about drinking and gambling as compared to Protestants.	()	()	()	()
The Catholic Church is unfair to demand that children of a Protestant/Catholic couple must be raised as Catholics.	()	()	()	()
<p>As you perhaps know, some denominations issue statements on current social issues. We are interested in how church people feel about some issues on which denominations have taken a stand. You will find a series of statements below. Would you indicate for each statement whether you agree, disagree or are uncertain.</p>				
42. Churches should stick to religion and not concern themselves with social, economic and political questions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain			

<p>43. Aside from preaching, there is little the church can do about social, economic and political questions.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain</p>
<p>44. It is proper for the church to state its position on practical political questions to local and national government.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain</p>
<p>45. War is justified when other ways of settling international disputes fail.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain</p>
<p>46. War cannot be avoided in our time.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain.</p>
<p>47. Great Britain should do everything it can to help "underdeveloped" countries raise their standard of living.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain.</p>
<p>48. Church people ought to recognize the right of conscientious objectors not to bear arms.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain.</p>

<p>49. The way they are run now, trade unions do this country more harm than good.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain.</p>
<p>50. Communism is as much a threat inside Great Britain as outside it.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain.</p>
<p>51. Methodism should press upon the nation the importance of temperance.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain.</p>
<p>52. Methodist teaching on abstinence keeps the ordinary man away from the church.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain.</p>
<p>53. Gambling is contrary to an acceptance of Divine will and Providence.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain.</p>
<p>We would now like to ask you a few questions about how you see the work of the minister of religion. Below are a number of specialized ministries which a minister might fulfill. For each specialized ministry, would you indicate whether you would like your minister to do this wort of work,</p>	

<p>54. Working for the social services.</p> <p>Working in industrial mission.</p> <p>Working in schools, colleges or universities.</p> <p>Working in politics</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain.</p>
<p>55. What would you say is the main work of the minister?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Visitation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Teaching and studying the Word.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Leadership of the Church.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Spreading the Gospel.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Administering the Sacrament.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Giving a Christian example to others.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify)</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

This is the last section of the questionnaire. Here we would like to know about some of the things you do and enjoy aside from religious activities and to learn something of your personal history. This information is particularly important if we are to understand how religion is part of the lives of people.

56. We would like to know something of the associations and clubs to which you belong. Below are listed various types of associations. In the right hand column opposite each kind of association write in the number of associations like this to which you belong. If none write in 0.

Hobby or garden clubs
(such as pet clubs,
garden clubs, stamp or
coin clubs).

Youth Clubs (such as Boy
Scouts, Boys Brigade).

Sports Clubs (such as
cricket, football or
swimming clubs).

Literary, art or discus-
sion groups (such as theatre
groups, amateur writers'
clubs).

Professional or academic
societies (such as the
B.M.A., British Federation
of University Women)

Trade Unions (such as the
Transport and General
Workers Union, Amalgamated
Society of Engineers)

Political organizations
(such as the Conservative
and Labour Party)

<p>56. Contd./</p> <p>Veteran Groups (such as the British Legion)</p> <p>Service Clubs (such as Samaritans, Alcoholics Anonymous).</p> <p>Other Organizations not listed above.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>57. Apart from church groups and activities how many times a week do you attend a meeting or other activity connected with non-church organizations to which you belong?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 8</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 9</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 10</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 7</p>
<p>58. How did you meet most of the people who are now your friends? (Tick more than one answer if necessary and then circle the most important).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> in the neighbourhood.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> at school.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> at work.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> at church</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> at parties</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> through my family</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> other _____</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>59. How much time do you spend watching T.V. each week?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> watch T.V. rarely or never</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 5 hrs.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 10 hrs.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 11 to 15 hrs.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 20 to 30 hrs.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> more than 30 hrs.</p>

<p>60. Do you ever make a point of listening to or watching religious services on radio or television?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, regularly.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, sometimes.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Very seldom.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No never, or practically never.</p>
<p>61. What is your present marital status?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Married. How long have you been married? _____ yrs.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Widowed. How long were you married? _____ yrs.</p> <p>How long have you been widowed? _____ yrs.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Divorced. How long were you married? _____ yrs.</p> <p>How long have you been divorced? _____ yrs.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Single. Are you engaged? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>62. If you are widowed, divorced, or single, will you consider getting married?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uncertain</p>

<p>63. How many children have you and what are their ages? (Please tick off the numbers of children you have and then write their ages against the appropriate number.)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> 0 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 _____ <input type="checkbox"/> 2 _____ <input type="checkbox"/> 3 _____ <input type="checkbox"/> 4 _____ <input type="checkbox"/> 5 _____ <input type="checkbox"/> 6 _____ <input type="checkbox"/> 7 _____ <input type="checkbox"/> 8 _____</p>
<p>64. What was your age at your last birthday?</p>	<p>_____ yrs.</p>
<p>65. During the time you were growing up what was the denominational affiliation of your parents?</p>	<p>Father _____ (denomination) Mother _____ (denomination)</p>
<p>66. On the opposite column, please indicate whether you are self-employed, employed, unemployed, retired, part-time employed, housewife, or pre-work (e.g. student or school child).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed <input type="checkbox"/> Employed <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed <input type="checkbox"/> Retired <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time employed <input type="checkbox"/> Housewife <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-work</p>

<p>67. Now will you write down what is the occupation of the head of your household?</p> <p>(If the head of your household is retired or presently unemployed, will you say what his (or her) most recent occupation was. Please be as explicit as possible and give the full title of the occupation).</p>	<p>The occupation of the head of my household is (or was) _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>68. Would you say whether the head of your household is a manager, foreman or neither of these?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Manager</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Foreman</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Neither</p>
<p>69. What was the type of school at which you last received full time education?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Public School</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Independent School</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Direct-grant grammar</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Secondary grammar</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Technical School</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Modern</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Secondary Comprehensive</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> All-age elementary School</p>

70. Please tick the figure which comes closest to what is the gross yearly income of the head of your household?

- | | | | | | |
|-----|------|-----|--------|-----|---------|
| () | £50 | () | £750 | () | £1,450 |
| () | £100 | () | £800 | () | £1,500 |
| () | £150 | () | £850 | () | £1,550 |
| () | £200 | () | £900 | () | £1,600 |
| () | £250 | () | £950 | () | £1,650 |
| () | £300 | () | £1,000 | () | £1,700 |
| () | £350 | () | £1,050 | () | £1,750 |
| () | £400 | () | £1,100 | () | £1,800 |
| () | £450 | () | £1,150 | () | £1,850 |
| () | £500 | () | £1,200 | () | £1,900 |
| () | £550 | () | £1,250 | () | £1,950 |
| () | £600 | () | £1,300 | () | £2,000 |
| () | £650 | () | £1,350 | () | £2,000+ |
| () | £700 | () | £1,400 | () | |

71. Would you please tick the range of giving which is closest to what is your contribution to the Sunday collection at your local church?

- | | | |
|-----|-------|---------|
| () | - | 2/6d |
| () | 2/7d | - 5/- |
| () | 5/1d | - 7/6d |
| () | 7/7d | - 10/- |
| () | 10/1d | - 12/6d |
| () | 12/7d | - 15/- |
| () | 15/1d | - 17/6d |
| () | 17/7d | - £1 |
| () | Over | £1. |

72. What is your political preference?

- | | |
|-----|-------------------------|
| () | Left wing Socialist. |
| () | Moderate Socialist. |
| () | Moderate Conservative. |
| () | Right wing Conservative |
| () | Radical Liberal. |
| () | Moderate Liberal. |
| () | Independent. |
| () | No party preference |
| () | Other (please specify) |

73. How did you vote in the last General Election?

- Did not vote.
- Voted Conservative.
- Voted Labour.
- Voted Liberal.
- Voted Communist.
- Voted Independent.

74. If you have had some help from another person in completing this questionnaire, would you say what sort of person this was?

(Tick as many as apply).

- A member of my family.
- A relative.
- A neighbour.
- A minister of religion.
- A lay member of the church.
- A friend.

We sincerely appreciate your help in this study. Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire.

The remainder of this page has been left blank for you to enter any comments you may wish to make.

Letter 1.

Bryan S. Turner,
Social Studies Department,
The University,
Leeds 2.

I am writing to ask for one or two hours of your time over the next few weeks in helping on a study of religion in British life, which is being conducted by the Social Studies Department of the University of Leeds. I do this with the approval of your minister, who has been consulted about the study, and who feels, as I hope you will, that it will produce a useful picture of Methodism and be extremely valuable for church planning.

What I would like you to do is to fill in the enclosed questionnaire. As you will see, it is a long one because a topic as important and complex as religion cannot be discussed briefly. Because of its length, you may not be able to answer all of the questions at one time. I hope, however, that you will take a few spare moments from time to time over the next week or so to answer them.

You are not asked to sign your name on the questionnaire so you can be sure that anything you say will be entirely confidential.

I know that this is a lot to ask of busy people. However, as you look at the questionnaire, I think you will agree that it deals with an important topic and that it will be useful to the church to know how their members feel on these matters. I also hope, by the way, that you will find it an interesting questionnaire.

Your generosity in giving time and effort to assist in this study is very deeply appreciated. I wish there were an opportunity to express my gratitude in person. My phone number is Leeds 55267 in case you have any questions that you may wish to raise. Again, many thanks for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Bryan S. Turner.

P.S. It occurs to me that you may be curious to know how you were chosen as a respondent. Your minister supplied me with a copy of the church membership roll and about ten members were selected at random from each of the churches in the Leeds District. You happened to be one of them. This procedure, which we are repeating in many congregations, assures us of accurate results, if everyone returns his questionnaire.

Letter 2.

Bryan S. Turner,
Social Studies Department,
The University,
Leeds 2.

Dear Friend,

Several weeks ago, I took the liberty, with your minister's permission, of asking you to fill in a questionnaire - a lengthy one, I'm afraid - in connection with a study of religion in British life.

In my earlier letter, I suggested that you take your time in filling in the questionnaire and I hope that you will not interpret this letter as undue pressure to hurry.

So far the response to the project has been very encouraging and those who have returned their questionnaire indicate that they found it interesting and thought provoking. Some people, who felt they were not 'typical' church members, wondered whether I wanted them to fill in the questionnaire anyway. I am very interested in each person chosen in the sample and in the variety of religious outlooks people have, not just in 'typical' members.

I tried very hard to follow scientific principles in picking the sample of people to whom I sent questionnaires. Whether or not I end up with a scientifically accurate study will depend upon the co-operation I receive from people like yourself. I recognize I am asking a lot of you. However, in the light of the help the study will be to the church generally, and to Methodism in particular, I hope you will find it possible to help me.

If you have already sent in your questionnaire, please disregard this letter and accept my apologies for having written to you again.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your help and patience.

Yours faithfully,

Bryan S. Turner

Letter 3.

Bryan S. Turner,
Social Studies Department,
The University,
Leeds 2.

I hope you will not be annoyed by my writing to you again about the study of Methodism which we are carrying out. I do so because your opinions are important to the study and without them the research cannot be completed.

Most people who have sent back their questionnaires have found filling them in a worthwhile experience and I have been pleased by the large number of favourable comments that people have made. The nicest comment came from a gentleman who said that he and his friends had used the questionnaire as a basis for discussions in a class meeting.

As far as I am aware, I have not yet heard from you. It may be that you have not had time to complete or have mislaid the questionnaire. Whatever the reason, I thought it would be worthwhile sending another copy of the questionnaire to you. I hope you will be willing to answer as many questions as possible.

Many people have asked whether they can have the results of the study. A summary of the survey will be sent to your church as soon as the results are available.

I hope you will have the same favourable reaction to the study that other people have had. Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely,

Bryan S. Turner

Appendix 2.

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Additional Errata

Throughout the text there are the following corrections:

"Leeds' Methodists"	Leeds Methodists
"Leeds' District"	Leeds District
"p.129 ff."	pp. 129 ff.
"R.K. Merton (et al.)"	R.K. Merton et al. (eds)

p. 4 "Relgion"	Religion
6 "of"	as
7 " <u>cort</u> "	<u>court</u>
8 "religious-sociology"	religious sociology
11 "1967"	1969
"1965, 32:1"	32:1, 1965
"1967"	1969
12 add emphases	
"Macmillan"	Collier-Macmillan
"1967"	1969
"1967"	1969
17 "referes"	refers
19 "Portestants"	Protestants
21 omit "or not" insert "a" before	"ritual"
30 "circumstanced"	circumstances

p. 35	"affected"	effected
47	"size"	size
	"size"	size
49	"to take sample"	to draw a sample
51	"Minister"	Ministers
83	Insert footnote 3 after "fully understood"	
85	"of"	on
89	"Membership"	membership
100	"(Cf. P. Berger <u>The Social Construction of Reality: everything that passes for knowledge in society</u>)"	P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann <u>The Social Construction of Reality</u>
117	"devotioanlism"	devotionalism
119	"one'"	one's
122	"nimmimum"	minimum
	"cirucits"	circuits
125	"arguement"	argument
127	"Whether or not "reading Leeds'"	Whether "reading
129	"wordly"	worldly
131	"Apolostic"	Apostolic
133	"Methodists) located"	Methodists) were located
135	"fellowhip"	fellowship
136	"of"	or
148	"There"	Their
150	"estrain"	restrain

p. 151 "experience his due"	experience his (sic) due
152 "desease"	disease
159 "onleft"	on left
160 "don"	done
179 "internal"	international
181 "religious-order"	religious order
185 "distrub"	disturb
186 "rational-models"	rational models
189 "recieved"	received
190 "espcially"	especially
191 "are"	as
193 "circumstances"	circumstance
"sect"	sects
195 "attractive"	attractive
198 "theecumenical"	the ecumenical
201 Add emphases	
<u>American Journal of Sociological</u> 24th February	<u>American Sociological</u> 24, February
202 "W. Pauck Harnack and Troeltsch, <u>Two Historical Theologians,</u>	W. Pauck, <u>Harnack and Troeltsch:</u> <u>Two Historical Theologians,</u>
""Church	"Church"
"Research"	<u>Research</u>
203 "Macmillan"	Collier-Macmillan
204 "Comment"	<u>Comment</u>

p. 204 "Wilson, pp.127-8"	Wilson, <u>Religion in Secular Society</u> , op.cit., pp.127-8
205 "Social Research"	<u>Social Research</u>
209 "synonomous"	synonymous
211 "losses from gains to"	losses from and gains to
214 "(Table 8:1)"	(Table 8:10)
220 "24th"	24,
"(et al.)"	et al., (eds)
"(et al.)"	et al., (eds)
221 "Heinemann"	SCM Press
222 "2764"	2760
"2889"	2899
"188"	197
"336"	327
"331"	340
"475"	466
223 "Royal Commission Report on Population"	Royal Commission on Population Report
240 Insert footnote 1 after chapter title.	
242 "Fellowship works and and"	Fellowship works and
247 After "stand on Scripture" insert "Before 1963, its critical energies were directed at 'organizational paralysis' in Methodism which it saw as yet another manifestation of Israelite legalism. ¹³ After 1963, the MRF was faced by the double problem of rejecting ecumenism and withdrawing from Methodism on the grounds that both were inconsistent with full adherence to Scripture."	
248 "Towards Reconciliation"	<u>Towards Reconciliation</u> ,

p. 249 "Sound of Revival"	<u>Sound of Revival</u>
260 " <u>Methodist</u> ,"	<u>Methodist Church</u>
270 "operations, centralization"	operations and centralization
273 "sixe"	size
274 "tangental"	tangential
282 "organizationala"	organizational
284 "American Political Science Review" "Blackwell, 1969!"	<u>American Political Science Review</u> Blackwell, 1970.
285 "tangental"	tangential
300 "immigrants"	immigrant
313 "experiences, rare"	experiences, are rare
"as the denomination recruits the majority of its membership from its inherited membership."	as the majority of the denomina- tion's membership is inherited.
314 "Regardless of"	Notwithstanding
315 "divine, that there is a life after death than Californian"	divine, and that there is a life after death than are Californian
335 "become"	became
336 "releave"	relieve
347 "Sociologie des Religions"	<u>Sociologie des Religions</u>
380 "Epwroth"	Epworth
384 "Study of Religion"	<u>Study of Religion</u>
386 "Macmillan"	Collier-Macmillan
387 "Sociology"	<u>Sociology</u>
"Heinemann"	SCM Press
"Political Parties"	<u>Political Parties</u>

p. 387 "Journal of Asian Studies"

Journal of Asian Studies

388 "1969"

1970

391 "Balze"

Blaze

"B. Turner 'Belief, Ritual
and Experience: the case of
Methodism', Social Compass,
1969/4

B. Turner, 'Belief, Ritual and
Experience: the case of
Methodism', Social Compass,
1970/2

In addition, two pages are numbered as "95". These should become "95a" and "95b". Two footnotes on p. 268 are numbered "12". The first footnote which refers to B. Wilson should become "11" and the second which refers to A. MacIntyre remains as "12".