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CH 600 History of Methodism

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CH600

HISTORY OF METHODISM (2 hours)

Fall, 2004
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Thursday, 9-10:45 a.m.

Office Hours: TBA

I. PURPOSE:

We will survey American Methodism from its beginnings to the present. The course materials focus on the theological, cultural, and institutional themes that shaped Methodism in America. The course especially highlights the spiritual, theological, and social aspects of Methodism's grand legacy. The evangelistic thrust, social concern, institutional development, and theological shifts noted in America between 1766 and the present will be seen against the backdrop not only of American political and cultural factors, but of the Methodist origins in England.

If you have been a United Methodist very long, you already know some things about American Methodist history. For example, almost all United Methodists understand that Bishop Francis Asbury was an important person, even if they do not know exactly why he was so important. Also, you are probably already aware that nineteenth-century Methodism dominated the American religious landscape, in a time when Methodism was the most significant religious force in the nation's growth and development. Many know that Methodism founded a host of colleges, seminaries, and universities, some of which now rank among America's best schools (I attended two of them myself, Duke as an undergraduate and Garrett-Evangelical for seminary). The majority of United Methodists have some appreciation of the prominent place of the early circuit riders, camp meetings, and class meetings. Most United Methodists understand that their liturgy echoes many of the strains inherited from Anglican liturgy. Most Methodists have some awareness that Methodism uniquely combined formal and informal styles of worship. In light of all this, Methodism, like several of the so-called old-line churches are ripe for a reexamination of their heritages.

We live in a time when many United Methodists want to know more about the legacy that is theirs. Obviously, a declining American Methodism does not mirror American Methodism in its original form. As stated above, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the Methodist Episcopal Church had become the largest and most influential of America's denominations. Indeed, at one time, Methodism's membership roles exceeded the combined membership roles of the rest of the nation's Protestant denominations. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, American Methodism began to change directions. If you want to understand the original genius of

American Methodism in order better to assess the present and more adequately to prepare for the future, this class will be a rewarding adventure. Since United Methodists cannot move into a challenging future without knowing their treasured past, the purpose of this course is to do just that.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

As a result of this course, our class both individually and corporately should be equipped to answer the following questions:

- (1) What is our “peculiar” genius?
- (1) How do the Evangelical Association and the Church of the United Brethren in Christ figure in all this?
- (2) What changes in American Methodism brought us to our present state?
- (3) Can the church recover its former power and influence?

This course should also do the following:

- (1) Serve as an introduction to the genesis, nature, and development of American Methodism, and as a base for further research and study.
- (2) If you are in the M.Div. or M.A. programs, this course will serve as either an elective or as a required course for United Methodists moving toward ordination.
- (3) For those moving toward United Methodist ordination, this course satisfies the need for a course in "Methodist History," as required by United Methodist Annual Conference Boards of Ordained Ministry.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The success of our class is dependent on the timely completion of all assignments, in active participation in class discussion, and in building relationships with one another. During the semester you will be required to do the following for individual grades:

- (1) **Assigned Readings:** You will be responsible for all reading assignments specified for each class. As a result you will actively and thoughtfully participate as a member of a learning community. We will be interacting with and learning from one another. Expectations will be spelled out on the first day of class. 10% of final grade.
- (2) **Research Paper:** You will select a topic from those covered during the semester and write a 10-12 page research paper (typed, doubled spaced) on that topic. The research paper will be **due** the last day of classes. On questions of style with regard to paper organization and references, see Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses* (10th ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). 30% of final grade.
- (3) **Quizzes:** Two quizzes. Times and details TBA. 30% of final grade.
- (4) **Final Exam:** Scheduled TBA. The specifics will be explained in class. 30 % of final grade.

During the week you are also asked and encouraged to do the following:

(1) **Pray Daily for All Participants in Our Course:** I encourage you to pray for everyone in our class and for our seminary. Please feel free to share prayer requests throughout the semester. Know that I will pray daily for you individually and as a group.
(2) **Enjoy and Go Deeper:** God has given us the awesome ability to know each other and to know Him. This semester in our work, in our discussions, in our readings, and in our chats we will have an opportunity to deepen our connection to God and to deepen our relationship with each other.

IV. ASSIGNED TEXTS:

These textbooks may be obtained from the Asbury Theological Seminary Cokesbury Bookstore.

Required texts:

Kinghorn, Kenneth, *The Heritage of American Methodism*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

Norwood, Frederick A., *The Story of American Methodism*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974.

Those students who have read either of these books can arrange to read alternate materials.

Recommended for present and future reference:

Keller, Rosemary, *Spirituality and Social Responsibility: Vision of Women in the United Methodist Tradition*, Abingdon, 1993.

Rowe, Kenneth E., Editor, *United Methodist Studies: Basic Bibliographies*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 3rd edition, 1992.

Tuttle, Robert G., Jr., *On Giant Shoulders: The History, Role, and Influence of the Evangelist in the Movement Called Methodism*, Discipleship Resources, 1984 (available in the bookstore as a printout).

V. Bibliography

An excellent basic bibliographical source for seminarians and United Methodist pastors is Kenneth E. Rowe's book recommended above. It's in the bookstore. For book collectors of *Methodistica*, this volume will prove useful in your browsing in used bookstores. Rowe's work, *United Methodist Studies: Basic Bibliographies*, has as its purpose "to provide a selected list of the basic resources for students and instructors of seminary-level courses in United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity, and to indicate minimum standards for libraries to support such courses. . . . Out of print works are included only if no suitable alternative exists in print." The materials are arranged topically, and, as well, the volume contains an index of authors and editors as an aid to locating works by particular individuals. The list of current periodicals published by the worldwide family of Methodist churches is comprehensive.

VI. COURSE OUTLINE:

The following is a broad outline of the individual classes for the semester.

Sept 9:

Part I: The Marks of a Treasured Past

This session deals with the organizational and theological heritage of American Methodism. The lecture does not study the details of Methodist polity and theology, as these two subjects are covered in other courses at Asbury Theological Seminary--United Methodist Polity and United Methodist Doctrine. The purpose of the lecture is to show how primitive Methodism responded to the challenges and opportunities of the times.

KINGHORN, Chapter 1, pp. 7-20.

NORWOOD, Introduction, Chapters 1-4, pp. 15-60.

Part II: 1766: The Beginnings of American Methodism

This session discusses the first two permanent Methodist communities in America: those led by Philip Embury in New York City and Robert Strawbridge in Maryland. Attention is also given to Barbara Heck, Thomas Webb, George Whitefield, and John Wesley's early "missionaries to our brethren in New York."

KINGHORN, Chapter 2, pp. 21-36,

NORWOOD, Chapters 5-7, pp. 61-93.

Sept. 16:

Part I: 1784: American Methodism Becomes a Church

In 1784 American Methodism moved from a cluster of societies to a new denomination--The Methodist Episcopal Church. This lecture examines the questions of the sacraments and ordination. Attention is given to Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury and the circumstances leading to the Christmas Conference. American Methodism's doctrinal standards also receive attention.

KINGHORN, Chapter 3, pp. 37-50.

NORWOOD, Chapter 8, pp. 94-102.

Part II: 1800: The Beginnings of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ

This session looks at Philip William Otterbein, Martin Boehm, Christian Newcomer, and other leaders of the United Brethren. The early parallels between the United Brethren and the Methodist Episcopal Church are considered. Subjects of particular importance include the United Brethren *Confession of Faith*, denominational publishing, and educational institutions. This session also deals schisms in the Church of the United Brethren in Christ. In 1946 this church merged with the Evangelical Church to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church. In 1968 this denomination joined the Methodists to become the United Methodist Church.

KINGHORN, Chapter 6, pp. 77-87.
NORWOOD, Chapter 9, pp. 103-110.

Sept. 23:

Part I: 1803: The Beginnings of the Evangelical Association, and the Formation of the Evangelical United Brethren Church

The Evangelical Association, or “Albright’s People” paralleled the United Brethren in working among German-speaking Americans. This session focuses on the church’s founder, Jacob Albright. Also, the class will study Joseph Long, John Seybert, and W.W. Orwig. The session also considers the Evangelical Church’s distinctives, doctrine, polity, and institutions.

KINGHORN, Chapter 6, pp. 87-92
NORWOOD, Chapter, 10, 36, pp. 111-118; 417-425.

Part II: The Structure of the Methodist Episcopal Church

This class period deals with the episcopacy, “traveling elders,” the superintendency, the congregations, the class meetings, bands, and love feasts. Also discussed are Methodism’s *General Rules* and conference systems.

KINGHORN, Chapter 5, pp. 65-76
NORWOOD, Chapters 11-12, 32, pp. 119-144; 363-380.

Sept. 30:

Part I: Circuit Riders, Evangelism, & Church Growth

The itinerant system and the circuit riders contributed immeasurably to development and rapid growth of the early Methodist Episcopal Church. This session looks at early Methodist evangelism and the nature of church growth.

KINGHORN, Chapters 4-5, 11, pp.51-76; 151-164
NORWOOD, Chapters 13-14, 23, pp. 145-163; 259-270.

Part II: Methodism and Music

Methodism was a singing church. This lecture discusses Wesley’s first collection of hymns for American Methodism. Attention is given to the splendor of the Wesleyan hymns and the varieties of music used in Methodist worship during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A handout traces the various editions of hymnals in Methodism.

KINGHORN, Chapter 10, pp. 139-150.

Oct. 7:

Part I: 1830: The Methodist Protestant Church

During the 1820s debates swirled within Episcopal Methodism over lay representation in the conferences and over the power of the episcopacy. These issues led in 1830 to the formation of the Methodist Protestant Church--the first of several major schisms to divide

the Methodist Episcopal Church. Attention is given to William S. Stockton and the *Mutual Rights* magazine. Early Methodist Protestant leaders are highlighted.
NORWOOD, Chapter 16, pp. 175-184.

Part II: Slavery, Schism, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South

Although Methodism began as an anti-slavery church, compromises eroded the church's original stand. This lecture shows how northern and southern Methodism differed over slavery, the status of the episcopacy, and the power of General Conference. Differences led, in 1844, to a major schism in Episcopal Methodism and, in 1845, the formation of the M.E. Church, South.

NORWOOD, Chapter 17-18, pp. 185-209.

Oct. 14:

Part I: 1843: The Wesleyan Methodist Church

Early tensions over slavery came to a head in 1843 with the formation of the Wesleyan Methodist "Connection." This lecture focuses on Orange Scott the leader of the new denomination and Episcopal Methodism's response to the slavery controversy.

Part II: 1860: The Free Methodist Church

Disagreements over "holiness" led to the formation of the Free Methodist Church. This lecture deals with Benjamin T. Roberts and other members of the Genesee Conference who formed the Nazarite party and, eventually in 1860, the formation of the Free Methodist Church.

Oct. 21:

Part I: The Methodist Educational Enterprise

The class will study Methodism's official sponsorship of education. Of special note are Methodism's Sunday schools, academies, colleges, and theological seminaries. The lecture looks at Martin Ruter, the father of Methodist higher education, and John Dempster, the father of Methodist theological education.

KINGHORN, Chapter 8, pp. 109-124.

NORWOOD, Chapter 27, pp. 302-308.

Part II: Methodism and Publishing

From John Wesley's "Christian Library" to United Methodism's present-day publishing enterprises, the printed page has occupied an important place in the Methodist tradition. This lecture looks at books, authors, and publishing houses as they have developed and contributed to Methodism in America.

NORWOOD, Chapter 19-20, 27, pp. 210-238' 308-315.

Oct. 28:

Part I: Methodism and the Black Communities

This lecture traces the contributions of Black Methodists. Of special importance are Richard Allen, the founder of the *African Methodist Episcopal Church*, and William Stillwell and Ezekiel Cooper of the *African Methodist Zion Church*, and Peter Spencer, a leader of the *African Union Church* (originally, Union church of Africans).

KINGHORN, Chapter 7, pp. 93-108.

NORWOOD, Chapter 15, 24, pp. 164-174; 271-281.

Part II: American Methodist Missions

Because the early American Methodists considered all circuit riders as “missionaries,” the church was slow to develop a Board of Missions. This lecture focuses on Episcopal Methodism’s work among the western frontier, the American Indians, and the Black communities. Special attention is given to the importance of Methodist women in establishing the church’s Missionary Society.

KINGHORN, Chapter 12, pp. 165-176.

NORWOOD, Chapter 25, 29, pp. 282-291; 330-340.

Nov. 4:

Part I: Methodism and Christian Perfection

This class period focuses on the Holiness Movement in American Methodism. Students will compare Wesley’s teaching on Christian perfection with that of the evolving Holiness Movement. Attention is given to “holiness” camp meetings and the Holiness Movement’s shifting attitudes toward the Methodist Episcopal Church.

NORWOOD, Chapter 26, pp. 292-301.

Part II: 1939: The Formation of the Methodist Church

In 1939 three denominations--the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the Methodist Protestant Church--joined for form the Methodist Church. The almost 95 years of union discussions brought to the surface the concerns, weaknesses, and strengths of each of the three branches of Methodism. This session looks at the adjustments in denominational polity, which came about as a result of the years of merger talks.

NORWOOD, Chapter 35, pp. 406-416.

Nov. 11:

Part I: Women and Methodism

This lecture focuses on the contributions of women to American Methodism.

Throughout the history of American Methodism, women have outnumbered the men in church membership and in service. Of special interest is the long struggle for female lay delegates and for the ordination of women in Methodism (attained in 1956).

Part II: The Evolution of Methodist Polity

This session deals with changes in the Discipline, particularly as they affect the episcopacy, lay representation, and the conference structures. Due to time constraints, this lecture may be deleted from the class sessions.

NORWOOD, Chapter 2-22, pp, 239-258.

Nov. 18: (guest lecturer TBA)

Part I: Methodism and Social Issues

From Methodism's beginning under John Wesley, the movement has insisted on the application of the gospel to the social needs of humankind. This lecture traces Methodism and social issues and ends with the development of Methodism's *Social Principles* in 1908.

NORWOOD, Chapter 30, 34, pp. 341-354; 391-405.

Part II: Methodist Worship and Preaching

This session deals with the history of worship in the Methodist tradition. Of special interest is the legacy of Anglican liturgy, the evolution of liturgy in American Methodism, and preaching in the Methodist tradition.

KINGHORN, Chapter 9, pp. 125-138.

Fall Reading Week, Nov. 22-26

Dec. 2: (guest lecturer TBA)

Part I: New Directions in Methodist Theology

This class period examines the major shifts that have taken place in Methodism. Of special interest are orthodoxy, Liberal Evangelicalism, Evangelical Liberalism, The Social Gospel, Personalism, Neo-orthodoxy, Existentialism, radical theologies, liberation theologies, and process theology.

NORWOOD, Chapter 28, 33, pp. 316-329; 381-390.

Part II: Methodism and the Ecumenical Movement

This lecture focuses on the church in ecumenical theological dialogue. Attention is given to the World Methodist Conference, Methodist theological consultations, the National Convocation of Methodist Theological faculties, and the Oxford Institutes.

Norwood, Chapter 31, 38, pp. 355-362; 437-442.

Dec 9:

Part I: Evangelical Renewal Influences/and 1968: The United Methodist Church/

This lecture surveys such movements as the Methodist League for Faith and Life (1925), the Good News Movement (1966), the Charismatic Movement (1970s), the Wesleyan Theological Society, and other efforts to renew the church from an evangelical

perspective. Attention is also given to the place of orthodox scholarship in the academy and in the pulpit.

In addition this lecture details the union of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church, which became the United Methodist Church.

NORWOOD, Chapter 37, pp. 426-436.

Part II: Pluralism and Methodism's Theological Tradition/and Special Interest Groups and United Methodism

The 1908 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church voted that the bishops no longer had the responsibility to monitor the doctrinal directions of the church's theological schools. Following this action, the Course of Study was changed significantly, and Methodism moved into new theological paradigms. This lecture traces these developments and their effects on the church.

Finally, this lecture also focuses the church's 1972 decision to become an "inclusive church." This new direction was anticipated by the rise of special interest groups and caucuses. The class will examine Gay and Lesbian Caucuses (1964), Black Methodists for Church Renewal (1968), the Commission of Religion and Race (1968), the Commission of Status and Role of Women (1970), the American Indian Caucus (1970), the Asian-American Caucus (1971), MARCHA--Methodists Associated Representing the Cause of Hispanic Americans (1971), and the U. M. Women's Caucus (1971).

Dec. 15: Final Exam.

"Readings in Methodist History" for those who would like to extend the course to 3 hours. This requires an additional 400 pages of reading and extends your research paper to 12-15 pages.