

# ***Why I Left...***

## ***The Methodist church***

By Earl E. Robertson

In my early childhood my father and mother ceased faithfulness to the Lord and, during this period, mother insisted I go to a nearby Methodist Church. She said it would help me be a better person in life. This influence only caused me to surrender to the teachings of this denomination. I was energetic in the work of this religious order, and tried to influence others. In these early impressive years parents should exercise much care for their children's regimentation to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:4).

### **1. The Human Origin of Methodism.**

The Methodist Church developed in the movement led by John Wesley early in the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival in England. Wesley was an Anglican priest and felt the Anglican Church lacked piety or "scriptural holiness." What he started was called a Society at the beginning, but this culminated in the Methodist Church. Seeking holiness or a closer walk with God they used various "methods" to achieve their objective; in derision their enemies called them "Methodists." These "methods" were employed in trial and error looking for the ones that worked to their advantage. These various local societies of humans used whatever they thought might lead to the degree of holiness to satisfy themselves.

The Methodist Church has never claimed to be the church founded by Jesus. Its early mission was to "spread religion." Their historians say, "Coming late in the history of Christianity, it was able to profit by the experience of other Churches," so, confessed to be too late to be the church established by Christ. (The Meaning of Methodism, 25). The same author says, "It cannot claim to be 'the Church,' because everybody knows that it did not come into existence as an organization until 1739" (Ibid., 127). Being human in origin it possessed the inherent right to change its doctrine at the will of its founder, and this became the reason for early defections by many of its most noble and able preachers.

It is true that Jesus founded his church on the first Pentecost following his resurrection from the dead, as promised by the prophets of God and affirmed to have been fulfilled by the apostles (Isa 2:1-4; Acts 2:1-47). This church is identified in scripture as the kingdom of God (Matt 16:18-19; Col 1:13), and the body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23). This church of Christ and the Methodist Church are two different churches; one acting under the authority of the New Testament and the other under the authority of The Methodist Discipline. From this fundamental fact, the earliest problems I experienced were created: why create a church that is human in origin and function when Jesus already has one that he built and controls? In studying the Bible I began to see our church and our actions were outside the scripture. This is troubling to one who believes in doing only as the Bible teaches (Col 3:17).

### **2. Human Doctrines vs. the Bible**

I left the Methodist Church because it teaches justification is by "faith only" (Discipline, Article 9, p. 13), but the Bible says it is "not by faith only" (James 2:24). The Bible emphatically teaches justification is by faith, but not by faith only. God demands faith in pleasing him (Heb 11:6), but faith that does not act is not saving faith. Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved"

(Mark 16:16). Belief only is not what Jesus said. He requires both belief and baptism for salvation. The Methodist Church does not teach what Jesus taught for salvation.

This fact was vividly impressed upon me in a sermon preached by J. Ermin Poer on the conversion of the eunuch in Acts 8. Carefully he showed how the eunuch, after having had Christ preached to him from Isaiah 53, came to believe that Jesus is the Christ, confessed that faith openly, and was baptized into Christ for the remission of his sins (Acts 8:34-39). I read along as Poer read aloud this account of a New Testament conversion, and I then was convinced of its accuracy; I was cut to the heart like those at Jerusalem on Pentecost (Acts 2:36-38). Just as the eunuch "went on his way rejoicing," so did I following my scriptural baptism!

Furthermore, the Methodist Church grants choices in modes of baptism, but the Bible uses the term "burial" for baptism (Rom 6:4; Cot 2:12). Burial shows the action of the word baptize. The Bible simply calls it a burial. Pour and sprinlde do not meet the lexical and definitive demands in the word baptize. When the evangelist Philip baptized the eunuch the Bible says "both Philip and eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him ... now when they came up out of the water" (Acts 8:38 NKJV). This action is as W. E. Vine states: "baptism, consisting of the processes of immersion submersion and emergence" (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, Vol. 1, p. 96). It is down into the water and a coming up out of the water; it is a new birth. Pour or sprinlde are mere substitutes for what God says, and when either one is used God is not obeyed at all.

The Methodist Church sprinkles babies and calls it baptism. Our Lord shows the one to be baptized is one that believes and repents of his sins (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38). A baby can do neither. The Discipline taught up to 1910 that babies are "conceived and born in sin" and needed water sprinkled on them to enter the kingdom of God, but following this date the creed was changed, saying, the baby is "conceived and born in Christ," and this statement is used in the stated ceremony of the sprinkling [baptism]. After all this The Discipline informs us that baptism is not essential for salvation, though Jesus and the apostles said it is (John 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21).

### **3. Changing Human Doctrines vs. Unchanging Divine Truth**

Across the years The Discipline has changed often, but the Bible continues to say the same thing on every subject (Psa 119:89, 1 Pet 1:22-232. Instrumental music in worship disturbed me after I was challenged to give a biblical reason for using it. I soon was forced through my own studies to say I couldn't find in the Bible authorization for it. At this time in my life I did not understand and appreciate the fact that what the church Jesus built does in worship it must have Bible authority for (John 4:24).

This is where the problem with instrumental music became my problem. The Bible says "singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph 5:19). The action in the verbs singing and making melody have the human heart as their direct object; inspiration names the instrument on which the music is made — the human heart. "Music" is generic; "sing" is specific. The Lord was specific when he named the species of music — sing." The Lord's statement authorizes only what he named; the use of any other species of music is an addition and is without divine authority (1 Cor 4:6, Matt 7:21-24). Being satisfied with exactly what the Lord teaches on worship is the acceptable attitude one must have toward his authority (2 Tim 1:13). Being unable to find Bible authority for instrumental music in worship, though The Discipline teaches its acceptance, I was convinced to leave the Methodist Church.

I then wanted to go to heaven, and still do, above all other objectives. I am convinced that in order to make this transition I have to be honest with myself and with God; I must reverence him and his word (Luke 8:15; Isa 66:2). This honest conviction moved me to commitment; commitment to walk by faith that comes from God's word (Rom 10:17) demanded my departure from the Methodist Church to fellowship in the body of Christ which is his church (Eph 1:22-23; Rom 16:16).