

StraitWay



July 2000

Why I Left The Methodist Church

I became a member of the Methodist Church...at the age of twelve....the result of being brought up in a Methodist family. I had been taught that one should believe in Christ and then join the church of his choice, and his choice as a rule would be the one of his parents. On June 5th, 1948, I obeyed the gospel of Christ, thus leaving the Methodist Church...I have often been asked, "Why did you leave the Methodist Church?"

First, I will state some of the reasons I did not leave the Methodist Church: (1) I was not made to leave. There was no pressure from within the Methodist Church for me to leave. (2) I did not leave because of the people in the Methodist Church. There are some of the finest...people in the Methodist Church that you would ever want to know. (3) I did not leave the Methodist Church because it was not a popular church. The majority of people were Methodist in my hometown.

After my discharge from the navy in 1946, I...made my home in Charlotte, TN. In 1947, Grover Stevens moved to Charlotte. I was attending many of the services of the church of Christ where he was preaching, and became very angry at some of his remarks. During this same time, brother Leonard Tyler conducted several meetings in this area which I attended; and at which I was made angry. I became so mad at some of their remarks that I began to study my Bible to try to justify myself as a Methodist and at the same time to find error in their teaching, which I would have been happy to expose.

Finally, I saw that I was fighting a losing battle and I either had to obey the gospel or stay with the Methodist Church. It was a very difficult battle, knowing that I would be leaving that which I had been taught from childhood up, knowing that my personal friends would turn their back upon me, and knowing the heartache that it would cause my mother to see her only child leave the family religion. I made up my mind to put God first and obey His will.

My leaving the Methodist Church was due to the fact that error was exposed and truth was taught in a plain manner...yet with love. I am deeply grateful to such preachers.

A. Name. The first impression that was made on my mind was that the Methodist Church was wrong in name. Such a name could not be found in the Bible. I was called a Methodist, but yet no one in the Bible was ever called such. I was taught that they were called Christians (I Pt 4:16; Ac 11:26). I immediately saw that I could not scripturally justify the use of the name Methodist.

B. Wesley, the founder, not Christ. It was made clear that John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist Church and not Jesus Christ. If I wanted to be a member of the church that Jesus built, then I would not be a Methodist. Such preaching stirred up my spirit to the extent that I became dissatisfied with being a member of the church John Wesley built.

C. Faith only salvation. I had always believed that one was saved by faith only. This is exactly what the Methodist Church teaches about salvation. However, when I was told to read Jas. 2:24, I was made to see in words that none could misunderstand that "faith only" was wrong. I began to read more and more and found ...that Jesus required faith and baptism (Mk. 16:16).

(Continued on back page)

The Evangelist and His Work - Carnal Tactics Faced By The Evangelist, Part II

Establishing Rank in the Church

Brethren rightly protest the distinctions erected between "clergy" and "laity" in human religious systems, but they often commit the same error by developing an elitist view of elders in the local church. Such a view sees elders as inherently blessed with wisdom beyond others so they need no input from the rest of the church. They seem to say, "We're in control, and you need to stay in your place." These elders see no need to keep members in-formed about the gospel work being supported, financial matters, or major decisions affecting the church. It is beyond them to request prayers, comments, or suggestions from others. While some may not use these very words, they clearly think them because they never solicit or accept such input.

Closely connected with elitist elders is the practice of lording it over God's heritage. What else would it take for elders to act as lords, in defiance of the Lord and in opposition to his order in 1 Peter 5:3, than to display such secretive modes of operating, to refuse to share information with the congregation, and to refuse to listen to others. Elders must remember the charge allotted to them is God's heritage, for them to lead and oversee as God's stewards or caretakers (Tit. 1:7). They must lead and shepherd God's people as a sacred trust as God wants them led, not as their own selfish desires would dictate. Paul said elders must not be self-willed men.

How can men such as these inspire confidence in the ones they seek to lead? How can they lead people having no confidence in them as leaders? Because open communication is needed to have followers, then elders need to sit down with members of the congregation so both sides can benefit from the two-way communication. When the members don't know what the elders are thinking or planning and when elders lack the confidence of the people, there is no more leading than there is following: NONE! Men that should be warning, teaching, exhorting, and setting an example for God's people, in such circum-stances as these, are actually lame-duck leaders.

Political Machinations

Satan never has more cause for delight than when he enlists purported disciples of Christ for the work of building political machines in local churches, with them feeding on the desire for power and the grab for power made by those claiming to be of Christ. This kind of power does not exist in the spiritual kingdom (Matt. 20:20-28). More times than saints would like to think, efforts to line up a base of political power among members have been exerted by having groups to meet and discuss objectives they want to achieve, by use of petitions to exert negative pressure against someone, by refusal to love actively (even to speak to) those against whom the intrigue is being promoted, by gossip campaigns, and by other arrogant displays of carnality. How can such people love their brethren? They do not, and they lie if they claim to. Paul's rebuke of similarly motivated saints in Corinth should be heeded (1 Cor. 3:1-4).

Bobby Graham, 24978 Bubba Trail, Athens, AL 35613 bobbylgraham@juno.com

"A. D. 70" Doctrine

Do We Receive Our Eternal Rewards Now?

According to this doctrine, after the fall of Jerusalem the world entered the 'eternal days' of a type of Heaven on earth. Some teach that Christ is still on His throne and others believe that He is not on His throne, but down here among us. They teach that when one becomes a Christian, that person instantly receives his final reward. Some go so far as to deny that Christians die today; that they simply go instantly to heaven {the OTHER heaven!}.

The Bible is quite clear on this subject of when final rewards are to be given and what those rewards are to be. Notice in Mark 10:30, Jesus promised His followers that they would receive eternal life in the 'age to come'. In Luke 20:35, Jesus speaks of an 'age to come', when there will be no marriage or death. There is nothing in the context that demands a figurative application of these terms. This context is a good illustration of the extremes some go to in pursuit of this doctrine. One proponent told me that in the 'eternal days' after A.D. 70, Christians do not marry physically 'in some sense' or die physically 'in some sense'. Here's a real dilemma for these fellows. If you're not married to your 'spouse', then you are living in fornication. If you are married, then 'in some sense', you must not be Christians! Do those who believe this doctrine have funerals for Christians who die physically but 'in some sense' really don't? Can a Christian who cannot die, be murdered? This passage DEMANDS a yet future age when flesh and blood will be no more.

In 2 Tim. 4:8, Paul looks forward to the crown of righteousness that both he and all other saved will receive 'in that day'. In 1 John 2:25, John says that eternal life is a PROMISE that God has given us. Notice in 1 Peter 1: 2-4, He 'has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, RESERVED IN HEAVEN FOR YOU'. Looking at Peter's words, if we have our eternal reward in possession now, then how can we lose it? In 1 John 3:2, John says that when we see Him, we shall be like Him. Christ has the firstfruits, a resurrected glorified body. We are promised ours when He comes. {1 Cor. 15:23}.

What about the wicked? Do they receive their eternal rewards now also? I ask an A.D. 70 preacher about Satan. He said that he was cast into hell at Jerusalem's fall. Imagine that, the devil is no longer the god of this age, the tempter, and is no longer working through the sons of disobedience. If the Kingdom of Christ was delivered up to the Father 1930 odd years ago, then not only were the righteous foreordained to heaven but the wicked must've been preordained to hell also! The righteous can't do anything to be lost and the poor wicked can't do anything to be saved. What a mess!

Institutionalism - Unscriptural Arguments

From its beginning in 1849, the UCMS was never widely accepted among brethren. Not only was there strong objection to it, the churches simply refused to support it financially. It has even been questioned by some who have studied the Restoration Movement, if Alexander Campbell finally saw the truth about the UCMS. In his book "Foundation Facts and Primary Principles" G. C. Brewer, p.221, states that Alexander Campbell, (the first president of the Society, an office he retained until his death), left nothing to the society in his will when he died. He left \$5000 to his home congregation to do missionary work, but nothing for the society.

While some looked upon Alexander Campbell as the founder of the society, they viewed W. K. Pendleton, his son-in-law, as its savior. From the beginning he was one of the society's staunchest defenders. Twice in the history of the UCMS, he was called upon by the society to deliver a speech in its defense during their annual convention.

Even though other arguments in defense of the society were made before and after his speech in 1866, what Pendleton said at that time contained the substance of almost every argument used to support it. Some may have expanded on some parts of the speech, but as far as the substance is concerned, little new can be found. Even today, those who seek to establish and maintain human institutions follow the substance of Pendleton's defense of the society.

One of the arguments used by opponents of the society was that in establishing the society the proponents had departed from "original ground." i.e. that it was unknown to the early restoration movement. Some were saying that it was a reversal of what Campbell had taught years earlier in his paper "The Christian Baptist." To the charge that it was a departure from "original ground" Pendleton freely admitted. He simply argued that to say the Missionary Society is wrong because it was unknown in the earlier restoration movement, is to follow human opinions. and this was contrary to the very genius of the movement. Suppose the early pioneers did have the opinion that it was wrong to support a society; that should not be binding upon all. He then charged the opponents had misunderstood what Campbell had written. He said Campbell's writings must be understood in light of the fact he was attacking the ABUSE by denominations, not the institution itself. Pendleton's reply was weak, and his prejudice showed through. He seemed to suggest that by opposing the society they were saying Campbell had been opposed to doing missionary work. This was not true. None of the opponents ever charged Campbell with opposing missionary work in his earlier writings, they were simply opposing the PLAN of doing it through a human institution such as a missionary society. Students of the restoration movement today can read how thoroughly Jacob Creath Jr and David Lipscomb pointed out in their writings that the things Campbell advocated in "The Christian Baptist" in which he opposed human institutions and societies, were contrary to that which he later wrote in the "Millennial Harbinger" where he encouraged them. But in none of their writings did the opponents ever suggest that Campbell had been opposed to missionary work.

From this argument Pendleton advanced to discuss the main charge that the Missionary Society was unscriptural. The society's opponents argued there was no such precept in the scripture which allowed it. Pendleton' answered, "You say, 'Your Missionary Society is not scriptural'--and you mean by this, that there is no special express precept in the scriptures commanding it. We concede this without a moment's hesitation. There is none; but what do you make of it? Is everything which is not scriptural, therefore wrong?" Thus, Pendleton admitted that even though the scriptures were silent about the society, this did not argue against its existence. He then demanded to know on what basis does one make mere silence prohibitive. Have you heard this argument before? We will explore this more fully in the next issue.

Tommy Thornhill, 13675 Hwy 341, Randolph, MS 38864 (662-568-2960) thornhill@tycom.net

Popular Doctrines - "The Sinner's Prayer?"

I received a sample packet of tracts from "The Tract League" (a.k.a., "Faith, Prayer, & Tract League") out of Grand Rapids, MI not long ago. Nearly every tract encouraged people to say a "sinner's prayer" and then join a church, be baptized, etc. Some examples of their "prayers": **1.** "Jesus, I believe and I need the salvation you have provided. Come into my heart, rule my life today, and show me how to live. Amen" **From: "The Plain Gospel"** **2.** "Jesus, I believe that you are the holy Son of God. I believe that you died on the cross for my sins and that you rose from the dead. You are my salvation. Please wash all my sins away and make me a child of God. I give my life to you today. Amen" **From: "What Is Meant By Salvation?"** **3.** "Jesus, I need your salvation. I open my heart to you. I confess that you are God's own son, and that you died on the cross to save me from my sin. Help me to turn from my ways and follow you. Make me ready for your return and show me how to live in the days ahead. Amen." **From: "Jesus Is Coming Again"** **4.** "Jesus, I am sorry for the things I do and say that are wrong. Make me your child, take care of me and help me from now on to follow you. Amen." **From: "Here's A Treat For You And Some Good News."**

All of us have seen prayers like these. Unfortunately, some may be deceived into saying a similar prayer, and think that they are saved. What does the Bible say about such prayers?

The Bible Never Mentions Such A Thing As A "Sinner's Prayer."

What verse might one use to prove that one can pray a "sinner's prayer" in order to be saved? Some might use Luke 18:13. The problem with this is that the men mentioned in the text (Pharisee and publican) were both Jews! They were children of God and allowed to enter the Temple; but no "*stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor ... in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary*" (Ezek. 44:9). Therefore, the publican's prayer of "*God be merciful to me a sinner*" would not be applicable to one outside of Christ today. Which New Testament passage teaches us to say a "sinner's prayer" where, at that moment, one is saved? "*We know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth*" (Jn. 9:31).

Each Of The Prayers Mentioned Are Different.

Notice that the "prayers" recorded above are all different. Two prayers do not even mention faith! (I wonder if our denominational friends would consider one saved if he tried to join them and said he had prayed one of the two prayers that doesn't even mention faith in Christ?) Why bring this up? It is because in the New Testament, those God considered saved did the same thing in order to be saved. Each one heard God's word (Rom. 10:17; Acts 8:5, 35, 16:13, 2:22), they believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 2:36, 8:12, 16:31, Mk. 16:16), repented of their sins (Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38, 17:31), confessed their faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37), and were baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:16; Acts 8:12-13, 16:15, 33, 22:16). Each case of conversion in the Bible is consistent.

These Prayers Offer Another Way To Be Saved.

The "sinner's prayer" is nothing more than a veiled attempt by man at circumventing God's law by providing an alternate way to be saved. Christ said, "*He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, ... the same is a thief and a robber*" (Jn. 10:1). Who is the door? Christ! (Jn. 10:7, 9) He is the way (Jn. 14:6)! People such as Philip (Acts 8:5, 12, 35-39), Paul (Acts 17:3, 18:8), and Peter (Acts 2:22, 36-38, 3:19) pointed people to Christ. They did this by teaching what Christ taught (Acts 4:20, 9:22). Where in the Scriptures does Christ teach men to pray a "sinner's prayer" in order to be saved?

The "sinner's prayer" is the old denominational doctrine of "praying through" to God. The only difference is that in the past, "praying through" meant one might pray one prayer after another, but not "get through" on the first try. This version of "praying through" promises you'll "get through" on the first try! Our responsibility is to follow Christ's word "as is," and not be caught up in the feel-good, free, no cost, nothing to do, and nothing to lose salvation that the world is promising. The "sinner's prayer" promises something it cannot provide (i.e., salvation). Let us do the will of God, and follow His word all the days of our lives (Acts 2:36-38; Acts 22:16; II Pet. 1:5-11; Rev. 2:10; I Cor. 15:58).

Jarrod Jacobs 2155 Sunset Dr. White Bluff, TN 37187 JJacobs291@aol.com

Conversion: -- Sequence

We have come to the seventh article in a series on the conversion of a sinner. Space is limited and yet a review is vital at this point. We have discussed some basic principles of conversion. (article #1) We then began to examine the specific elements of conversion that require man's attention and obedience beginning with faith. Faith is necessary in order to be converted from the life of sin. (Heb.11:6; Jn.8:24) (article #2) We studied the element of repentance. Repentance is not simply feeling sorry for sins but that which proceeds from that sorrow. (2Cor.7:10; article #3) Confession is also a necessary element and falls naturally after a person's repentance. Before Philip would baptize the man from Ethiopia, he required this man to affirm his faith. Accordingly, he confessed with his mouth the Lord Jesus. (Rom.10:9-10; article #4) We last discussed the element of baptism. We showed in articles #5 and #6 that baptism is the point in which a person's sins are remitted. (Acts 2:38) It is the instant a person may go on his way rejoicing. (Acts 8:39) It marks the point of burial for the old man of sin. (Rom.6:3-4)

Sequence. Let's think for a moment about the sequence in which these elements work. There are many things around us that depend upon a particular order of operation. A drink machine is one such thing. For a soft drink machine to operate properly, it is understood that you must put your money in and push a button. Then a mechanism within the machine releases the chosen drink, and a track guides it eventually into your hands. If someone disrupts that system, the machine will fail to operate. Why? Because it operates according to a particular sequence. When something in that sequence is impeded, you'll notice they attach a sign to it that reads, "out of **order**". That means a link in its chain of operation has been broken or removed. Likewise, these commands of God to believe, repent, confess our faith, and be baptized in water for the remission of our sins must be observed in the proper sequence.

Conversion is the orderly change of the whole man. Faith involves a change in his intellect. Repentance involves a change in his will. Confession involves a change in his allegiance. And baptism marks a change in his relationship with God. These different *changes* must occur in this order and, therefore, these *commands* must be obeyed in this order. The order cannot be altered.

Doctrines that are "out of order". Just like the drink machine can fail, a doctrine that changes the order or system of conversion from that which God has ordained is "out of order". For example:

1. Baptism does not change one's intellect. Baptism is not the cure-all for sin. It is an element of salvation but by no means the most important element. It simply won't do for folks to be baptized because their family members were or because they have been coerced. This person is just as much an unbeliever after baptism as before. We must educate people about Jesus so that faith may result before baptism.

2. Faith does not change one's will. Some teach that repentance precedes faith. This doctrine is "out of order". It changes God's plan of converting man. Notice that the Jews in Jerusalem believed first (Acts 2:36-37), then were told to repent. (Acts 2:38) This is one proof among many that "faith only" doctrine does not have its origin with the Bible.

3. Repentance and confession alone do not change one's relationship with God. For the sinner seeking to be converted to Christ, water baptism serves as the bridge between being *outside* and *inside* Christ. (Gal. 3:26-27) As we noticed in the last two articles, omitting water baptism from God's system of salvation is to create a new plan that will be ruled "out of order" in the last day. (Matt.15:13)

In the last few lessons of this series, we will put this article to the test. We will examine some historical conversions from the book of Acts to see if these elements work together as I have described.

Wisdom

What is wisdom? “Knowledge denotes acquaintance with, or clear perception of facts: wisdom is the capacity of judging soundly and dealing with facts, esp, in their practical relations to life and conduct; it often implies depth of insight or ripeness of experience.” (Webster).

Consider some divine statements about wisdom: (1) Jesus said to the apostles, “I will give you a mouth and wisdom” (Lk. 21:15). What did Jesus tell them? I will give you WHAT to say (that is knowledge) and HOW to say it (that is wisdom). How many times have you known what to say, but was not sure how to say it? The apostles would be given both. (2) “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!...For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” (Rom. 11:33-36). (3) “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3) was said of Jesus Christ. (4) “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph. 3:10). The church of the Lord manifests the wisdom of heaven.

James gives the characteristics of heavenly wisdom: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17). With these characteristics in mind, think about what Jesus said at the end of the sermon on the mount: “Therefore whosoever heareth these saying of mine, and doeth them, I will like him unto a wise man...And every one that heareth these saying of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man...” (Mt. 7:24,26). Who among the following were wise and who were foolish? “But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles...And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:45,46,48). Who were wise and who foolish? “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:36-47). Who were the wise and who were the foolish?

Have you heard about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Cor. 15:1-4)? Have you believed that or have you rejected it like some of the Athenians (Acts 17:30ff)? If you believed, did you repent of your sins (Acts 2:38) or did you do like the Jews of Acts 13:45? If you repented, have you been baptized for the remission of your sins like the three thousand (Acts 2:38, 41) or did you reject the counsel of God against yourself like many in the days of John the Baptist (Lk. 7:29,30)?

Do you remember Jesus’ words? “Therefore whosoever heareth these saying of mine, and doeth them, I will like him unto a wise man....And every one that heareth these saying of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man...” (Mt. 7:24,26).

When you stand before God in the judgment, will you be there as a wise man or a foolish man? God has made it possible for you to be saved. Your eternal destiny is in your hands. Study carefully.

Glenn Melton, 322 Gray ST, Henderson, TX 75652-2734 (1-903-657-9089) glennmelton@juno.com

Why I Left The Methodist Church (Continued from front page)

D. Choice of baptism. I had always been taught in the Methodist Church that there were three ways to be baptized--(1) sprinkling, (2) pouring, (3) immersion. I was led to believe by Methodist preaching that it was up to the individual to select his own choice. To become a member, I selected sprinkling. The preaching that I heard exposed this error. I was told to read Colossians 2:12 and then Ephesians 4:5. I could see that according to God's teaching there was but one baptism; by Methodist teaching, there were three. I believed God.

E. Instrumental music. We had the instrument of music in services of the Methodist Church, and were led to believe that it was only an aid in the worship. It was plainly proved to me that such was not an aid but an addition to the word of God. I then was reminded of John 4:24, that one must worship God in truth. I was told that my worship would be in vain if done by the doctrines of men (Mt 15:9).

F. How to raise money. In the Methodist Church, we would have ice cream suppers, rummage sales, etc. to raise money for the church. The preaching that I heard by brother Stevens and others brought to my attention I Corinthians 16:1,2. This was God's plan of having the church members raise its money; and the pie supper, etc. were the ways of men. These were a few of the things that caused me to see the error of my way. Of course, since that time I have studied and found out many other errors. Thank God for Christ, His gospel and His church! (Written by Robert Jackson, adapted by the editor).

[This article appeared in the April 15, 1995 issue of The Dyersburg Pathfinder (Glenn Melton, Editor), a publication of the Northside Church of Christ, Dyersburg, TN.

-- Glenn Melton, 322 Gray ST, Henderson, TX 75652-2734 1-903-657-9089, glennmelton@juno.com

Visit StraitWay Online at <http://straitway.org>

StraitWay
18 Rosewood Dr
Jasper, Texas 75951

Editor: Glenn Melton

Address Correction Requested
Delivery Address

U.S. Bulk Rate
Postage Paid
Permit # 12
Colmesneil, Texas 75938

StraitWay is free to the recipient. Send names and address changes to:
StraitWay 18 Rosewood Dr. Jasper, TX 75951; glennmelton@juno.com or straitway@hendersons.net
Moving? Send change of address EARLY!! If your StraitWay is returned, you WILL be dropped!

Read the Bible Daily! Pray Daily! Worship in spirit and in truth!