

A Shamefully Brief History of Methodism

I. Background

A. The Enlightenment (17th and 18th Centuries) Main Beliefs:

1. Human reason is able to solve all problems.
2. Human beings naturally progress to perfection if left alone.
3. Toleration of religions is important because religion is not worth arguing or fighting about.

B. Deism -- the going philosophy of religion of the time

1. There is a Supreme Being, but he is not active in this world.
2. This Supreme Being should be worshiped.
3. The proper way to worship is by being a good person.
4. The reward for being a moral person is immortality.
5. There is no such thing as sin. Human problems are caused only by ignorance and superstition and can be solved by education.

II. John Wesley

A. Born June 17, 1703; Epworth, England (15th of 19 children born in 21 yrs)

B. Education - at home until age of 10, at Charter House, London, until 17, at Christ Church College, Oxford (Oxford was the center of Deism in England)

Wesley became leader of the "holy club"

C. Ordained deacon in the Church of England, 1725 Ordained elder (a priest with full powers), 1728

D. 1735 Missionary to the colony of Georgia

E. May 24, 1738, conversion experience at Aldersgate meeting house

F. Began the societies of people called Methodists as discussion groups (never intended to begin a new church)

G. A man of remarkable energy and ability

1. traveled more than 5,000 miles a year by horse, carriage, or boat
2. preached an average of 15 sermons a week (beginning at 5 a.m.)
3. wrote and read constantly
4. gave away all that he had

H. Died on March 2, 1791

III. A Church Is Organized as it Grows

A. Interested people in a town are gathered into a "society".

B. Each society is divided into "classes" of no more than 12 persons. The leader of each class must be a lay person.

C. Lay pastors are appointed to preach and give pastoral care.

D. Lay pastors meet each year for instruction, evaluation, and appointment.

E. When There are too many pastors and class leaders for Wesley to supervise personally, "superintendents" supervise them and report to Wesley.

F. Pastors are ordained for America in 1784.

G. After Wesley's death in 1791, the Wesleyan Methodist Church is formed.

IV. Methodism in the United States

A. The Methodist Church

1. 1766 Lay preaching -- Philip Embury in New York; Robert Strawbridge in Maryland,
2. 1769 the first ordained clergy -- Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore are sent from England
3. 1771 Francis Asbury (a layman) sent to America
4. 1776 The American Revolution
5. 1784 December 24 - The Methodist Episcopal Church formed (Lovely Lane Chapel, Baltimore) about 15,000 Methodists in America at the time
6. Methodism spreads via the circuit riders (By 1816, there are 200,000 Methodists in America)
7. Division and Union
 - a. 1792 Republican Methodists (protest to Asbury's appointive power)
 - b. 1816 African Methodist Episcopal Church
 - c. 1830 Methodist Protestant Church (favor the election of superintendents and the admission of laymen to Annual Conference)
 - d. 1843 Wesleyan Methodist Church (anti-slavery, opposed to aristocratic government, and appalled at attitude of church toward "dissenting brothers"
 - e. 1844 Methodist Episcopal Church, South (slavery issue and political rupture of nation)
 - f. 1839 (April 27; Kansas City, MO) The Methodist Church -- a union of The Methodist Episcopal Church; The Methodist Episcopal Church, South; and The Methodist Protestant Church

B. The Evangelical United Brethren Church

1. 1800 United Brethren Church, Maryland -- William Otterbein and Martin Boehm as bishops
2. 1803 The Evangelical Church, Pennsylvania -- Jacob Albright the main leader
3. 1946 The Evangelical United Brethren Church (E.U.B.) a union of The United Brethren Church and The Evangelical Church

C. The United Methodist Church 1968, Dallas, Texas, a union of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church

