

WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT THE METHODIST CHURCH?

out line used - DeWison

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Recently I talked to a woman who was very upset about an article she had read in which the Methodist Church was viciously and unjustly criticised. She asked me if there was some way to stop such attacks. I told her that every since the beginnings of our church there have been those who have thrown stones at it. It is said that the homes of the early Methodists were recognized by the number of broken windows, where people had thrown rocks at the homes of Methodists.

In my estimation some of the attacks on the Methodist Church are a compliment. You are known for your enemies as well as for your friends. It is a compliment that certain people are throwing rocks at the Methodist church. It would be worse if these same people were friends of Methodism.

The Methodist Church is not perfect. ~~I am a Metho-~~
It has its
~~dist because that was the community church where I lived.~~
faults. Those who love the church are the first to recognize the faults. But the good in Methodism far outshines her imperfections.

I believe in the Methodist Church. My love and admiration for the Methodist Church has increased, my devo-

tion and loyalty have intensified. ⁽²⁾ Let me tell you, then what I believe to be some of the very good things about Methodism.

1. What's good about the Methodist Church? Its emphasis on a personal Christian experience.

The business of the church today is the same as it has always been - to help men find God - and to come to know Him, love Him, and serve Him. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" is the way Paul put it. God is found thru Christ. The hope of the world is Jesus Christ. That has been and continues to be the emphasis of Methodism.

For example, our program of Christian education has that aim. It desires to help men find God, to come to know him, love and serve him. That is the purpose of the church school. Study the curriculum of the Methodist Church School and you will discover that is what this program accomplishes if carried out correctly.

You see, the Methodist church believes that a child never has to wander into the far country. The prodigal was at home when we first see him in the Gospel. He did not have to wander off into the far country before he recognized his Father's love. That's what our church school is

trying to do - help even the little child to come to know and love and serve Jesus Christ.

A school boy once wrote an essay on pins. He wrote: "Pins save 1000s of lives each year" The puzzled teacher asked, "How do pins save 1000s of lives each year?" He said, "by people not swallowing them"

Well, Methodist church schools save 1000s each year. How? By keeping boys and girls from wandering into the far country of sin and evil.

The theme of Methodism has always been the Christ of the gospels - not a Christ who is covered with all kinds of theological garb, but a living Christ, a working and saving Christ. Not theology, but Christ. We know that a person may be theologically correct and still be sound asleep spiritually.

An Iowan once drove to New York City. After emerging from one of the tunnels, he saw a maze of streets with no idea which way to go. So he just stopped. A friendly officer shouted, "Well Iowan where do you want to go?" So the man told him, the policeman stopped all the traffic and let the Iowan get on the right street.

That the church's business - to give people direction

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And when your going the right way, you know it. That's what we mean by personal experience.

2 What's good about the Methodist Church? The nourishment it gives it members.
SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS?

Newborn babes in Christ, whether 1 day old or 1000 years old, need nourishment. It is the business of the church, not only to direct people in the right direction, but to feed them while on the road.

Every part of the church's program is directed to that end. The worship service, the church school, womans groups youth groups, etc.

The opportunities fro nourishment offered thru the program of the church are unlimited. -- In this connection let me say that the Methodist church is not trying to make all of her members alike. Jesus didn't make puppets out of men - nor is the Methodist church interested in making Charly McCarthy's out of it memebers.

3. What's good about the Methodist church? Its organization; its connectionalism. We Methoedists do things together.

A Roman Catholic said to a Methodist one day. "Of all Protestant ministers I admire John Wesley most of all. If

Wesley had been a Catholic we would be recognized as a saint." The Methodist said as far as he was concerned Wesley was a saint. He was also a genius at organization. He is responsible for this tightly knit organization known as the Methodist Church.

Let me give you one example of Methodism's connectionism in action. Several years ago 2 of our bishops returned from Korea reporting that most of the Methodist churches there had been destroyed. They said that the Army would furnish manpower to help rebuild them, if the churches would supply the material. But the Korea church was broke, and the estimated need was \$1,000,000. But the bishops told American Methodism about it. One Sunday was designated Korean Relief Sunday; and Methodist people contributed \$1,500,000. - With one stroke, the People called Methodist, because of their organization, rebuilt a national Methodist church.

4. What's good about the Methodist Church? Its missionary program.

The Methodist Church has been a missionary church. & our missionaries go with a song in their hearts, thinking of their mission as a joy instead of a sacrifice.

What is a missionary like. Let bishop Gerald Kennedy⁽⁶⁾ tell you: "Nothing needs correction more than the world's picture of a missionary. To many people, he is a sentimental, impractical dreamer who is not too bright. His children are pictured a frustrated youngster who never have a good time. Brother you could never be more mistaken.

"The missionaries I know are not only preachers but men who can repair a roof, overhaul a motor, or perform an operation. They are the most resourceful people I've met. Their wives are charming, and their children happy and attractive. In my book they are Christian leadership at its best. Business would pay any price to get such people to represent it in faraway places. Yet they serve the church for a financial pittance and never complain.

"If you are looking for the greatest investment in the world, I offer you the missionary enterprise of the Methodist church. Its greatness is created and guaranteed by the most wonderful people in the world, our missionaries.

5. What's good about the Methodist Church? Its hopefulness.

John Wesley often said, "Best of all, God is with us" These are the words of a hopeful optimistic Christian.

"Best of all, God is with us"

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Harry Emerson Fosdick in a book entitled, "The Manhood of the Master" said, "Jesus believed in something better to come. He threw himself into the cause of the future" So Methodism is dedicated to march forward with Christ.

Instead of magnifying man's depravity, true Methodism has always emphasised man's opportunities. The Methodist revival was so successful in England because Wesley brought the Christian message of hope to the downtrodden. The miners and others had been told so long that they were scum, they believed it. For the first time in their lives, with the coming of Methodism, they were told that they had been made in the image of God, and that Christ died for them, too.

It is wrong to put too much emphasis on man's depravity. Sin is real, of course. No one knows that better than a minister who fights with it every day. But man's possibilities are real too. Wesley said, "Man is not a house of clay but a mortal spirit made in the image of God - a spirit of infinitely more value than the whole earth"

You keep telling people over and over again that they are hopeless sinners, and pretty soon they'll believe you and act like sinners. But thank God for the message of

the New Testament: "Now we are the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be" That was the message of Methodist from its beginning.

During the World War II and American stopped to buy a paper from a Londoner. "What's the news tonight?" He asked the paper seller. The man said, "I don't know, I never read the papers, because I know we'll win in the end." That old newsman must have been a Methodist.

The Methodist Church does not say that the future is easy - but it is saying that God is great. He is our hope.

6. What's good about the Methodist church? Its emphasis on action -- living.

Bishop Ensley says, "Methodists are not, generally speaking, theologians. We are activists rather than spectators".

Chas Wesley put it well in the hymn:

To serve the present age,
My calling to fulfill
O may it all my powers engage
to do my master's will.

To do my master's will. That's what we are here for. Someone has suggested that we need more people with Ch.D. degrees. Now, what is a CH.D. We know that a Ph.D. is a

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doctor of philosophy. But a Ch.D. is a doctor of character. Yes, we need more Ch.D.s.

Dr. Roy L. Smith in a recent book raises the question, "Do we really believe in God?". He goes on to say that there are many who claim they believe in God, then turn right around and live as if there were no God.

Methodists believe in God, and we believe that we should live as God wants us to live.

A man from Philadelphia was on vacation in the west one time. He stopped to see the grand canyon. He had never seen it before. He had seen pictures, but the pictures were inadequate. Now that he was there he was awed by the sight. For several minutes he stood looking at it in silence. Then he turned to a friend and said; "Something must have happened here"

When we see a follower of Jesus "letting his light shine before men" we feel the same way. We feel like saying "Something must have happened here. Something wonderful must have taken place in that life.

We Methodists believe that if something wonderful has happened to us, it will show up in our lives.

What's good about the Methodist Church? I repeat:

1. Its emphasis on a personal Christian experience
2. The nourishment it gives its members ^{social consciousness}
3. Its organization, its connectionalism
4. Its missionary program
5. Its hopefulness
6. Its emphasis on action -- living.