

Brits Making Mass Exodus From Methodist Church

The Methodist Church in Britain is hemorrhaging members and has been described by a leading religious affairs commentator as “a bit like an iceberg that’s just crumbling into the sea.”

The comments of Linda Woodhead, a sociologist at Lancaster University, follow the publication of a report called “Statistics for Mission” by the Methodist Church that shows a dramatic collapse of membership—to about 200,000 in the U.K.—in the last decade.

“During the past 10 years, membership of the Methodist Church has fallen by a third, with attendance falling by a similar proportion,” said Moira Sleight, editor and publisher of the *Methodist Recorder*.

Added Woodhead: “It’s totally dying out. On current trends, they (the Methodists) will disappear, very soon.”

Methodist churches sprung up in Britain during the aftermath of the French Revolution and the start of the Industrial Revolution—days when the working classes were poorly paid and revolution was in the air.

The brothers Charles and John Wesley were ordained Anglicans who defied the Church of England’s stuffy establishment by holding open-air meetings and writing more than 6,000 hymns urging industrial and agricultural laborers to turn their backs on alcohol and gambling.

In America, Methodists were popular because they helped fill a spiritual vacuum created by Anglicans who deserted their flocks at the time of the American Revolution.

Methodists around the world number between 70 million and 80

million people.

The United Methodist Church in the United States has 8 million members. There are approximately 5 million members in Africa, Asia and different parts of Europe.

In *The Times*, the former vice president of the Methodist Church, Richard Vautrey, said Methodists must not despair. "Let's not dwell on our pain," he said, "but instead celebrate each God-given day we have left."

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