

THE ADVANTAGES OF THE ITINERANCY.

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(FIRST PAPER.)



METHODISM has been termed "a Revival Church in its spirit, a missionary Church in its organization." It was a provisional necessity of the times—a new development of Christianity; and its founder could say, "I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." That the Church has had a marvellous history no one will deny,—its very facts wear the aspect of romance. The magnitude and grandeur of its success as a religious movement, sweep in upon us from the years as the sea-wave breaks upon the shore. A movement which, inaugurated by the efforts of a single man, who had no plan, no ulterior design further than to restore primitive Christianity, and raise up a holy people,—without traditional prestige, or the influence of popular respectability, without the support of state, or the patronage of power, or the resources of wealth,—has, in little more than a century, far outstripped many of the older denominations, and presented a growth unparalleled even in the history of Christianity itself, and now embodying one-seventh of the Protestant numerical strength of the world, is gathering to itself fresh elements of usefulness and power, and repeating the Gospel triumphs and glories of the past,—such a movement must be acknowledged a sublime success.

What are the causes of such prosperity?—Primarily, all must be ascribed to the grace of God, and the influence of the Holy Ghost; but, so far as human instrumentalities are concerned, we find the proximate cause of success in the providential character of the means used. There is a philosophy running through all the works of God; there are orders of sequences—means adapted to certain ends, and God, who sees the end from the beginning, was pleased to furnish a spiritual machinery at once unique and adapted to the circumstances and conditions of the age.

The most striking and permanent feature of this system is the *Itinerancy*; and to this peculiarity must be attributed much of the wonderful success of the organization. This extraordinary provision for carrying the Gospel to the masses, in all localities, was the product of Divine economy; and the best exponents of its spirit and practice are Wesley and Whitfield themselves, with their co-laborers, who, with their hearts strangely warmed and full of the Holy Ghost, went forth to abundant labors, preaching everywhere—"the Lord confirming the word with signs following." Their very successes developed the system,—the harvest outgrowing the strength of the reapers,—societies multiplying faster than the preachers, and requiring them to travel from one assembly to another. Wesley saw the utility of the system, and after fifty