

The Wesleyan.

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"WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING; THEREFORE GET WISDOM."

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Poetry.

PSALM CXLVIII.
(Dr. Ogilvie)

I.

Begin, my soul, th' exalted lay
Let each enraptur'd thought obey
And praise the Almighty's name.
Lo! heaven and earth, and seas and skies,
In one melodious concert rise,
To swell th' inspiring theme.

II.

Ye fields of light, celestial plains,
Where gay transporting beauty reigns,
Ye aecnes divinely fair,
Your Maker's wondrous power proclaim,
Tell how he form'd your shining frame,
And breath'd the fluid air.

III.

Ye angels, catch the thrilling sound;
While all th' adoring thrones around
His boundless mercy sing;
Let every listening saint above
Wake all the tuneful soul of love,
And touch the sweetest string.

IV.

Join, ye loud spheres, the vocal choir;
Thou, dazzling orb of liquid fire,
The mighty chorus aid:
Soon as grey evening gilds the plain,
Thou, moon, protract the melting strain,
And praise him in the shade.

V.

Thou heaven of heavens, his vast abode,
Ye clouds, proclaim your forming God,
Who call'd you worlds from night;
"Ye shades, dispel!"—th' Eternal said;
At once th' involving darkness fled,
And nature sprung to light.

VI.

Whate'er a blooming world contains,
That wings the air, that skims the plains,
United praise bestow—
Ye dragons sound his awful name
To heaven aloud; and roar acclaim,
Ye swelling deeps below.

VII.

Let every element rejoice:
Ye thunders, burst with awful voice
To him who bids you roll:
His praise in softer notes declare,
Each whispering breeze of yielding air,
And breathe it to the soul.

VIII.

To him, ye graceful cedars bow,
Ye towering mountains, bending low,
Your great Creator own
Tell, when affrighted nature shook,
How Sinai kindled at his look,
And trembled at his frown.

IX.

Ye flocks that haunt the humble vale,
Ye insects flutt'ring on the gale,
In mutual concourse rise;
Crop the gay rose's vermeil bloom,
And waft its spoils, a sweet perfume,
In incense to the skies.

X.

Wake, all ye mountain tribes, and sing;
Ye plumed warblers of the spring,
Harmonious anthems raise
To him who shap'd your fier mould,
Who tipp'd your glitt'ring wings with gold,
And tun'd your voice to praise.

XI.

Let man, by nobler passions way'd,
The feeling heart, the judging head,
In hearty praise employ;
Spread his tremendous name around,
Till heav'n's broad arch rings back the sound,
The gen'ral burst of joy.

XII.

Ye whom the charms of grandeur please,
Nurs'd on the downy lap of ease,
Fall prostrate at his throne;
Ye princes, rulers, all adore;
Praise him, ye kings, who makes your pow'r
An image of his own.

XIII.

Ye fair, by nature form'd to move,
O praise th' Eternal source of love,
With youth's enlivening fire
Let age take up the tuneful lay,
Sing his bless'd name—then soar away,
And ask an angel's lyre

PECULIARITIES OF METHODISM.

(From the Address of the British Conference to the Societies, 1841.)

The evangelical system is in itself all that was designed to be; and those sacred writings, by which it is made known to us, contain all that is necessary to secure their intended object. We are fully persuaded, and desire to keep in mind in all our ministrations, that "holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation;" and that here, therefore, are the doctrines which are to be believed and taught; here the commandments which are to be enforced and obeyed; here the "exceeding great and precious promises," describing the blessings which are to be desired, sought and experienced. The Ministers of Christ, indeed, speak to the people of their charge in the name of the Lord, as being, wherever a truly apostolical order in the appointment of Ministers is observed, not only partakers of the outward call, by the "laying on of the hands of the presbytery," but likewise first called to their work by the Lord himself, through the inward testimony and monition of the Holy Ghost. But they who thus "have the rule over you," are to speak unto you "the word of God," ever seeking to accomplish the weighty work in which they are engaged, by doctrine and exhortation taken out of the holy Scriptures. And there is an important sense in which you are to be fellow-labourers with us. If in all our ministrations and prayers we are to seek "that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God," you, likewise, are to "give all diligence that you may neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." We, by the careful study of Scripture, are to receive, as it were, the word at the mouth of God, and in speaking to you, always to be able to say, "Thus saith the Lord;" and you, loving the law of the Lord, and meditating in it day and night, are to seek that "the word of Christ may dwell in you richly in all wisdom;" that being "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," ye may "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Thus acknowledging the supreme and unalterable authority of the written word of God, we trust that in all our ministrations we shall be enabled to refer you to that true and primitive antiquity which was constituted and marked out by the holy Apostles of our Lord and Saviour, and, in effect, to say to you, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls." When we speak to you of what are sometimes termed, (and what we ourselves occasionally, for the sake of brevity and distinctness, term,) the peculiarities of Methodism, we mean, not that the doctrines on which our fathers laid so much stress, and which were, by God's blessing, the chief causes of their wonderful success, were derived from any other source than that from which alone Christian doctrine can be derived, namely, the sacred Scriptures; or that they were derived from these in any other way than that of patient investigation, carefully and devoutly conducted; availing itself, indeed, of all proper helps, whether of ancient or modern times, but yet, chiefly, making Scripture its own interpreter, and allowing nothing to interfere with the exalted, the unapproachable supremacy of the word of God. It was thus that the venerable Wesleys acted in reference to what, at

the time, they regarded as the novel doctrines which they heard from certain members of the Moravian Church, with whom they had providentially become acquainted. By the blessing of God on that religious training which they had received, they had been preserved from the grosser doctrinal errors of the day, and from those external immorities which prevailed around them. They held the great truths of what is usually regarded as catholic orthodoxy, and such was their freedom from the practice of vice, as well as their diligent attention to the outward duties of religion, that we are fully justified in applying to them the language of the Apostle respecting himself, (and in the very sense in which he appears to have used it) "Touching the righteousness of the law, blameless." But they had not that "rest to their souls" of which the Scriptures told them, implying true peace of conscience, power over inward sin, and the good hope through grace, which effects deliverance from the fear of death, and the bondage which it produces. They neither had this rest, nor did they see the way by which they might attain to it. At one time, indeed, they were in danger of falling into that sincere, but mistaken and gloomy, asceticism which, in the writings of Kempis, appeared so closely connected with the humble and self-denying piety, whose language continually exalted a crucified Redeemer, claiming to be the Head of a body of spiritually-crucified disciples. But they were not satisfied that they had entered upon "the old path, where is the good way," although of this ascetic piety they found some of the most decided examples in a very remote period of ecclesiastical antiquity, for they did not experience the desired rest to their souls. At length, what appeared to them a novelty was propounded; but they were told, that if they examined the Scriptures with true simplicity and earnest prayer, they would find this apparent novelty to be that old path which they were so diligently seeking. God's wonderful method of justifying the ungodly was thus brought before them. They were called to consider the justification of a sinner before God not merely as a doctrine to be believed, but as a blessing to be enjoyed, a blessing, in point of fact, introductory to the whole range of Christian blessedness, whether of happiness or of holiness.

Such were the statements made to them; but while they were powerfully impressed with the descriptions which were given them of the actual experience of those by whom the statements were made, yet it was not from the mouth of man that they could receive religious doctrine. With much prayer, and an honest determination to abide by the decision of these only oracles of God, "they searched the Scriptures, to see whether these things were so." And the result was, a full conviction of their truth. And now, for the first time, they understood their own state. They saw the blessings they had so long sought, to be the fruits of faith and justification; and what they believed as a doctrine, they sought to experience as a blessing, which it was their privilege and duty to possess. And their prayers were answered. They were "filled with all joy and peace through believing." And thus the whole nature of personal religion, as connected with justifying faith in Christ, and the direct witness of the Spirit of adoption, was opened to their view. This religion they immediately began to preach; and because the points to which they now attached such importance had fallen, comparatively, into disuse, their revival was considered by many as a new religion; and the points themselves, scriptural as they were shown to be, were represented as the peculiarities of Methodism. But God gave testimony to the word of his grace. From the moment that our fathers began thus to preach, the work of the Lord began to revive; and, from that time to the

present, the faithful announcement of the same truths has been unflinchingly accompanied by the bestowment of the same unequivocal blessing.

We have reminded you of these things, dearly beloved brethren, chiefly for the sake of those practical considerations which they suggest. We are conscientiously persuaded, that what we have thus referred to, as commonly called the peculiarities of Methodism, are the doctrines of holy writ respecting personal religion. For this same reason, however, they who hold them are, in all consistency, bound to see to it, that the great and fundamental blessings, to which these doctrines refer, be actually and clearly experienced by themselves. It is not sufficient that your views be correct; your hearts, likewise, must thus be right with God. Again, therefore, beloved brethren, we repeat the often-used word of exhortation on this all-important subject. As members, by your own voluntary choice, of the societies under our pastoral care, you are supposed to believe those doctrines which are held and taught among us. And we would affectionately invite you to study them, as they are stated with so much precision in these sermons of Mr. Wesley which refer to them. Not only, however, seek to understand them more perfectly, but rest not satisfied without the clear and personal experience of the blessings which they describe. We suggest to you such serious inquiries as these: Have you deeply felt, in reference to yourselves, that you can only enjoy the divine favour by being justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; and that this personal justification can only be obtained by faith in the Great Propitiation? Have you seen and felt your own need of pardon? Have you sought and received the Spirit of adoption to bear witness with your spirits that you are the children of God? Having the love of God thus shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto you, can you say for yourselves, "We love him because he first loved us!" We beseech you, brethren, not to rest without this clear experience of the pardoning mercy of God. So shall you have, not only a name to live, but be indeed alive from the dead through Jesus Christ our Lord. Your profession, proceeding from living faith, and sustained and animated by it, shall be both steady and consistent, and you will be in truth witnesses for God, of his willingness and power to save all that come to him by his Son, with a present, free, and full salvation.

And being in this manner brought to love God from the delightful experience of his love to yourselves, a broad, and deep, and stable foundation will be laid for a superstructure of inward and outward holiness, far exceeding all that the world admires under the names of morality and virtue. You will love the law of the Lord. It will be so written in your hearts, that none of his commandments will be grievous unto you. And here, likewise, you will suffer the word of exhortation. On this very subject of obedience, our Lord once addressed to his disciples the remarkable, the very significant, words, *What do ye more than others!* There is a human virtue, a social morality, the rules of which will be observed by all who wish to live in quiet agreement with their fellow-men, and to enjoy the benefits arising from a well-ordered constitution of society. But such human virtue is too often seen in melancholy association with human vice. Society may allow what the law of God prohibits. You, therefore, we earnestly exhort to the cultivation and practice of all that holiness which the New Testament describes and enjoins. Never dishonour the cause of Christ, and show your own departure from the grace of God, by falling below even the morality of the world. If, in this respect, notwithstanding your profession, you do less than others, the name of God and