

The Press and General Review

DEATH WARRANT OF DR. WEBSTER.

From the New York Evangelist

Continued from page 252.

An examination of these various laws shows not only the Divine judgment in regard to the crime of murder, but also how the Jews themselves interpreted the grand fundamental statute given to mankind from God, the statute communicated to Noah, "Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The most express laws were framed to carry the purposes of the statute by the solemnity of a human tribunal, and the hand of an appointed human agency. That agency was solemnly styled the Avenger of Blood; and in the New Testament, that executive power, as bearing not the sword in vain, is styled the minister of God, a Revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. If there is one thing clear in God's Statute Book, it is that the murderer shall be punished by death.

For the highest crime against human society, the highest and most terrible penalty is allotted. And in order that that efficacy might not be diminished, and so the purpose of the law itself defeated, all commutation of the punishment was forbidden. The highest penalty of the law was one from which there could, for the guilty, be no redemption. It must, at all hazards, under all circumstances, be executed. Thus would its deterring power remain, and every execution be a blessing to society.

And thus firmly and undeviatingly, we are convinced, the details of wisdom and mercy require every human government to carry out the will of God in the execution of this penalty. The wisdom and firmness of the Governor and Council of the state of Massachusetts, in the case of Dr. Webster, are praiseworthy. What murderer might not hope to escape, if the mistaken lenity demanded by so many petitions in this instance had been shown? It strikes us that those very petitions, and the strenuous efforts made for the commutation of the punishment of the criminal, demonstrate the tremendous efficacy of that punishment in the community, and its merciful tendency to prevent the commission of this most dreadful crime in any community where it is well known that the murderer cannot escape. Let that be the universal conviction, through the known firmness of the government, and a man would almost as soon take his own life, as attempt the life of another, being sure that the taking of the life of another would be inevitably the taking of his own.

As to the publicity of the execution, we are sure that it never ought to be permitted. It should take place with a few witnesses, as privately and solemnly as the case will admit. To making the hanging of a murderer an occasion for the assembling of a promiscuous, indiscriminate crowd, drawn together by a morbid, or shocked, or savage sensibility and curiosity, as in some monstrous cases in England, is for the government to aid in defeating its own intentions, and preventing the very object of the penalty, and the law. It is enough that the processes of the trial, and the sentence, and all proceedings up almost to the last, are public and known; but a veil should be drawn over the last scene, and the death of the criminal ought to be almost as private and unseen by the multitude, as the loneliness of his prison, and the commission of his crime. As few persons should be admitted to witness an execution, as is consistent with the assurance against all treachery and deception, all possibility of a counterfeit penalty, or evasion of the law. It is enough that the hour of the execution is known, and its fulfilment certain.

WESLEYAN METHODIST AFFAIRS IN ENGLAND.

During twelve months past, the Wesleyan Body in England has been in a state of agitation, such as never existed in that community before. The expulsion of the Revs. Everett, Dunn, and Griffith, was the dawn of a new era, in that community. Around these expelled ministers a formidable array of staunch old Methodists have rallied; men, who, while "with all her faults, loving Methodism still," are unwilling to idolize those faults, or to perpetuate their existence. On the other hand a large majority of the community, have either tacitly or avowedly sustained the proceedings of the conference in condemning three of its members, though of long standing in the connexion, unheard and without evidence. Satisfied of the strength of their cause, the expelled ministers have gone through the length and breadth of the land, exposing what they deem the tyranny of the Conference, and urging the laity to seek the reform of "Methodism as it is." This, as might be expected, has called forth resistance from the dominant party, insomuch that in addition to public debate, and an inveterate paper war, the work of expelling members of society, who have evinced sympathy with the expelled ministers has been performed extensively and with a high hand.

The House thus divided against itself, conflicting hopes and fears were excited throughout the connexion. Charges, grave, numerous, and in many instances well sustained, were alleged against many of the leading preachers in the Conference; and facts and figures were brought in a formidable array against the proceedings of the dominant party. But amid this turmoil and agitation every eye seemed directed to a coming crisis—a point where matters must assume a decided character, favorable or unfavorable to the cause of liberty, the rights of the people. That point—the annual Conference has arrived, and we have before us a portion of its proceedings, as reported in the *British Banner* and the *Wesleyan Times*. Of the tendency of its movements, we wish our readers to have a fair opportunity of judging, and therefore, to the exclusion of other matter, our columns contain several articles respecting the present crisis in Wesleyan affairs, and for several weeks to come, we shall, as far as the case may demand, adopt a similar course. Finding our space too limited to furnish a report of the proceedings of the Conference, we shall review the whole briefly and impartially.—*Ed. Watchman.*

NO SECESSION.

The preachers assembled in Conference appear to be under a delusion. The fault shall not be ours if it remain upon them. We will, at least, give them the benefit of what we sincerely believe to be the real truth. They have been misled, whether by their own fancies or by artful representations, matters little. It is their firm persuasion, that, after Conference, there will be a secession, and that, then, peace and tranquility will be restored to our distracted and convulsed Connexion. They have been taught to believe, that they have only to be firm—to turn a deaf ear and a blind eye towards all remonstrances from without; and that, disheartened by their decided attitude, the "disaffected" will abandon the cause of Reform, and either unite with some other section of Methodists, or set up a rival denomination of their own.

Gentlemen, it is all a dream. There will be nothing of the kind. You are pursuing the very course which the best friends to Reform have most reason to desire. Your "firmness," as in self-flattery you call it, is most conspicuous. Persevere; by all means persevere. Had you thought of making the least concession, the probability is that the Reform party would have been dissolved and melted away, Wesleyan Methodists are so exceedingly good natured, so prone to exaggerate the merits and to extenuate the failings of their ministers, that even a smile, to say nothing of a promise, would have completely unmanned them, and they would not have been fit to do duty again under the banner of Reform until the rigours of some new "winter of discontent" had braced their energies afresh for the encounter. Many thanks to you, therefore, for having studiously refrained from a piece of policy which might have proved fatal to our cause. To you we owe it that the spirit of our patriot army is unbroken, that its morale is preserved. You have made an excellent commencement. prosecute the course you have begun, and our obligations to you will be complete.

Suck to your text. ignore the existence of dissatisfaction. Persist in it that the Reformers comprise the scum and offscouring of the Connexion. Never mind the corollary, that, in that case, it is high time the discipline of our body were better administered. Pay and stay, omit and quit, is the rule, you know, on which "Methodism as it is" proceeds, and, if bad people do occasionally intrude themselves into our societies, why, let them remain, so long as they quietly pay the price for being made better.—To select a striking example, so long as Mr. Harrison, of Wakefield, paid fifty guineas a year to the Missionary Society, of course he was free of the annual Committee of Review; but when, in the exercise of a discretion which did not belong to him, or, if you like, of an indiscretion which did, he suddenly reduced his subscription from fifty to one, why, of course, it was fifty to one whether there would be room for him in the Committee of Review. A fortnight, if a man considerably attenuate or wholly withdraw his class and ticket money, let him be treated as a heathen man and a publican, but, so long as he pays, though a heathen man and a publican in fact, let him have imputed to him all the praises, privileges, and immunities of a fellow-citizen with the saints!

And, by the way, there is no act in particular for which we feel more deeply indebted to the dominant party, than for sending the impertinent ex Mayor of Wakefield to the right about. To be sure he is reputed to be wealthy and influential; but what do the Spartan heads of our Connexion care for gold and luxury? Do we not all very well know, that, with primitive simplicity, they invariably give the preference to the poor over the rich? Oh! it is truly edifying to witness the friendly meekness with which they will sit down with the poor members of the flock at their humble boards, while the more affluent are so itching them in vain with the provoking odours of their delicious vi-

ands. Why, one has only to look down the *Watchman's* list of the preachers and their hosts, to perceive at a glance, that, with a beautiful confusion of classes, the most popular ministers are housed with the poorest people, while the legs of the less pretentious expatiate at ease beneath the mahogany of the rich.

Go on, then, gentlemen. Pay no attention, if you please, to the memorials of Special Circuit Meetings; still less, were it possible, to the irregular remonstrances of "unconstitutional" gatherings. Let none of these things move you. Eat, drink, and be merry, and let your souls delight themselves in fatness. But remember one thing. Let not your memories become so utterly oblivious as to forget, that, at the very commencement of your sittings, we warned you that *there will be no secession*. We will not undertake, indeed, that every individual Reformer among tens of thousands shall be able so completely to control his disgust, as under no conceivable circumstances to throw up his society ticket, and with it his seat at chapel. But we have the calmest confidence in assuring you, that, among the bulk of Reformers, there is but one determination; and that is, come what come may, to stick to the ship. The vessel is theirs, you are but passengers. In any storm, you want to save yourselves; but their anxiety is to save the ship. While, therefore, a plank is left, they will stick to the ship.—Blow high, blow low, that is their resolve.

Wesleyan Reformers! we turn to you. Have we misrepresented you? Is it not your settled determination to keep your places in the body? Has not past experience convinced you that the foundering vessel of the Connexion can be saved only by every man sticking to the ship? Respond, then, to the appeal. Nail your colours to the mast, and lash yourselves to the rigging. Refuse either to go or to be thrown overboard. Show the preachers that they shall not—cannot—get rid of you. Nay, take your own bark in your own charge. Up helm, 'bout ship; so shall you steer the noble vessel clear of those rocks upon which an infatuated pilotage seems bent on running her; so shall you save both yourselves and them that *will not hear you!*—*Wesleyan Times.*

WHAT OTHER CHURCHES SAY.

No men have been more anxious to stand well, in appearance, in the estimation of the British Churches, than the dominant party in the Conference. They have often sacrificed the dignity of the Connexion to that morbid affection; and when a more than usually adulatory compliment has been uttered by an influential Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Dissenter, it has been heralded all over the country. We do not wonder at the anxiety, as the policy of the party, being opposed to the principles of the New Testament, and inimical to the rights of man, needs some shade to hide it from public gaze. If the judgment of other churches, when approbative, was unexceptionable and not to be disregarded, surely that same judgment, when condemnatory, is of equal weight and authority. If one was eagerly courted, the other cannot be repudiated. If, in the one case, the opinions were entitled to regard, we cannot see how, in the other, with any show of consistency, they can be disregarded. What was legitimate in the first instance, must be legitimate in the second.

Since the last Conference, both Episcopalians and Dissenters have, in general, stood aloof from the body; apparently looking on with wondering amazement, not knowing precisely what to make of the ministerial and lay excommunications which have from time to time taken place; and, feeling unable to approve, as formerly, they have been unwilling to condemn their old friends. That state of mind is passing away, and, by-and-by, if the Conference, repents not, and refuses to turn from the error of its way, it must be content to hear its condemnation pronounced by every church in the land, and by those, too, who have hitherto regarded Methodism with peculiar affection.

The question is assuming more than Connexional importance. It is one in which the honor of Christians and the success of Christianity is involved, and the true Church of the Redeemer, as well as every individual Christian, is bound to look at it as such. Men and ministers cannot be indifferent, if they would. They might as well be indifferent to the diffusion of the principles of the Roman Propagandists, as to the Popish pretension to absolute prerogative set up by the Wesleyan Conference. We are glad to find that other churches are leaving their points of observation, and lending a helping hand to the movement for Scriptural Reform.—Dr. Wardlaw has done himself credit by opening his pulpit to Mr. Griffith; and so have the gentlemen who at Aberdeen and Frome came forward to take part in the public meetings at those places.

Dr. Mackintosh, of Aberdeen, a minister of the Established Church, said, at the meeting there, he did not rise to move a vote of sympathy with the Expelled Ministers "in the ordinary sense of that term, but rather to move, that the meeting express its respect for those gentlemen, and admiration of their conduct (applause). He was gratified at having an opportunity of being present on the occasion. Seeing that the reverend gentlemen who had addressed them were laboring to uphold principles in which every Church of the Redeemer was interested, he would deem

it his duty and privilege to do all in his power to strengthen their hands (applause). Every Christian community was no doubt entitled and bound to exercise its own discipline in its own way; but, when they found principles unblushingly avowed, and actions fearlessly perpetrated which, if tolerated, would accomplish the utter destruction of all that was valuable in liberty, it was high time for every man to speak his mind (applause); and it was just because these principles had been brought out so glaringly, and because it was felt absolutely necessary to resist them, that the sympathy of Britons everywhere had been so largely expressed with these gentlemen (applause). He was certain that, if this agitation only continued a little longer, Conference would have but little to lose."

Then, at the Frome meeting, the several gentlemen present spoke in decided terms. They evidently look at the subject as involving great and vital principles. Hear the Rev. W. Ferris (Independent).—"The interest I feel in the matter is not lessened by the fact of your belonging to another denomination of Christians. You are sheep of the same great fold—a corps of the same army—a part of the same family with ourselves, and of the household of faith."—As such, I welcome you here, and shall be glad to hear of the progress this important movement is making (cheers). In combatting the objection that other ministers should not interfere, he argued: "Suppose that all the dignitaries of the church coincided with the Bishop of Exeter, and not only prohibited Mr. Gorham from holding a living and proclaiming the gospel of Christ in that particular diocese, but proceeded to silence him altogether, and, in fact, to excommunicate him from all fellowship from the Established Church. Now, supposing that there is no moral delinquency alleged, that the Christian character of Mr. Gorham is unimpeached and unimpeachable, and that, for avowing his disbelief of baptismal regeneration alone, he is cut off from the Church of England and forbidden to minister at its altars; in fact, for this offence, condemned to life-long silence.—Under these circumstances he visits this town and says, 'I should be glad of a pulpit elsewhere since I may not preach in any of the consecrated buildings of this realm. I still long to proclaim the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and also should be glad of an opportunity of laying my whole case before the British public, in order that they may judge between me and my accusers. I cannot consent to sink into obscurity and neglect—covered with a cloud, and regarded as a man guilty of some criminality, and, in consequence, reproached and shunned, without the opportunity of self-defence. Will you allow me the use of your pulpit, and will your friends consent to allow me this place of worship?'—Now, I could not stand by with cold indifference and reply, 'This is a matter belonging exclusively to the Church of England; we have nothing to do with it!' No; it would not be humane, to do so. I should say: 'Mr. Gorham my pulpit is at your service for such a purpose, with all my heart' (cheers.) I need not apply this illustration; and its application to the case is obvious." And its force will be felt by every unprejudiced individual.

The Rev. J. C. Middleitch (Baptist) affirmed that Christians in general are interested in the proceedings of the Wesleyan Conference, because their laws are issued in the name of Christ, and all Christians must be entitled to ask if those laws are in accordance with the religion of Christ, and if not, then to protest against them as a reproach to their common law. If it were right to send protests from Europe to America, saying to fellow-professors there, "You do our religion and our Saviour wrong by holding coloured men in bondage," it must be right for Baptists and Independents, to say to them, "You do our religion and our Saviour wrong by enacting and enforcing in His name laws that oppress and injure our fellow-men," and, in an ably-reasoned speech proved to demonstration that the assumptions of the dominant party were unscriptural, and, therefore, legitimate subjects for animadversion and attack. The Rev. S. Manning (of the Baptist persuasion) also claimed, as a man, the right to express his opinion on the matters at issue in the Connexion. "I claim that right," said he, "as a man (loud cheers); and as, therefore, affected by all that affects my fellow-man, I cannot isolate myself from them. 'No man liveth to himself.' 'No man would' to do so, unless he be intensely selfish. U. lead to every sentiment of justice and generosity, I must sympathize with the insulted and the injured, and must give expression to these sentiments. As a Christian, too, I dare not by silence seem to countenance the wrong (cheers.) If Wesleyans claim to be Christians themselves, and admit us to be Christians too, they must admit that, though different members, we are of the same body, unless they are prepared to unchurch us." We leave these opinions to be pondered over by those who have perpetrated and abetted the wrong, and who now say it is nobody's business.—*Ibid.*

Review of the proceedings of the Annual Conference, in Committees, &c., of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in England.

Owing to the refusal of Conference to admit a reporter, for the *Wesleyan Times* or the *Christian Citizen*, a verbatim report of the proceedings