

tion, and asking them to unite in prayer that the occasion may be one of great spiritual profit and blessing.

2. That the last Sunday in June (23th) being the 200th anniversary of the birth of John Wesley (June 17th old style), be observed in all our churches, as a day of thanksgiving for what God has wrought; and of earnest prayer that the spirit and practice of Primitive Methodism may be revived among us; and that suitable discourses be preached on the occasion.

3. That the celebration proper begin on the first Sunday in October, with appropriate discourses, having especial reference to the life and labors of Mr. Wesley, and the wonderful results of the Methodist revival; to be followed, whenever practicable, by several weeks of revival effort for the deepening of spiritual life in the Church and the salvation of the unconverted.

4. That the last Sunday in October be set apart, wherever practicable, as the day on which to receive the free-will offerings of the people in aid of the Special Thanksgiving Fund of \$250,000 for missions authorized by the General Conference; but in any case, let the appeal be made not later than the last Sunday in November. This is something distinct from the ordinary missionary income, and the two should be kept entirely separate. To this end the Executive Committee suggests that for the coming year the missionary anniversaries be deferred till after the 1st of January, 1904, so that the two funds may not clash.

Such an opportunity has not hitherto been before the church. Nothing like it will occur again in this generation. Let us, by God's help, make it an epoch year in the church's history in these two respects: A mighty revival on every circuit, and a thank-offering of a quarter of a million for missions.

## John Wesley and Sunday Schools.\*

BY THE EDITOR.

WITH his usual sagacity and foresight, which anticipated so many of the philanthropic and religious institutions of later times, John Wesley early adopted Sunday Schools for

religious instruction of the people called Methodists." Mr. Edwin W. Rice, in his *History of Sunday Schools* cites several examples of the existence of such schools before the date of Robert Raikes. In 1769 a young Methodist named Hannah Ball established a Sunday School, says Dr. Abel Stevens, in Whycombe, England. These sporadic schools, however, do not detract from the merit of Raikes as father and founder of the modern Sunday School system.

Robert Raikes was a citizen of Gloucester, England, and proprietor of the Gloucester Journal. In that city many a youth of both sexes were employed in the pin and other factories. The heart of Raikes was stirred by the Sabbath desecration, profanity, and ragged wretchedness of the untaught youth. In 1781, he engaged four female teachers to receive and instruct in reading and in the Catechism such children as should be sent to them on Sunday.

The children were required to come with clean hands and faces, and hair combed and with such clothing as they had. They were to stay from ten to twelve, then to go home; to return at one, and after a lesson to be conducted to church; after church to repeat portions of the Catechism; to go home at five quietly, without playing in the streets. Diligent scholars received rewards of Bibles, Testaments, books, combs, shoes, and clothing. The teachers were paid a shilling a day.

Not until November 3, 1783, did Raikes refer in his journal to these schools. The following year he published in his paper an account of his plan. John Wesley reprinted this account in the *Arminian Magazine*, and exhorted the Methodist people to adopt the new system of religious instruction. He speaks of them prophetically: "I find these schools springing up wherever I go; perhaps God may have a deeper end therein than men are aware of; who knows but some of these schools may become nurseries for Christians?" The early Methodists took Wesley's advice, and hard-working men and women began to instruct their neighbor's children, and to go with them to the house of God on the Lord's Day.

John Fletcher, of Madeley, adopted the method, and soon had three hundred children under instruction, and diligently trained them till his last illness. Sunday Schools were introduced in the Metropolis by Rowland Hill in 1786. The same year Wesley states that five hundred and fifty

\* Abridged from Withrow's "Religious Progress of the Nineteenth Century."