

The Wesleyan.

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

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WESLEYAN TRACTS FOR THE TIMES, No. 5.

MODERN METHODISM, WESLEYAN METHODISM.

Concluded.

It is said, however, by the "Layman of the church of England," "You have separated from the Church, in Mr. Wesley's sense, inasmuch as you have renounced some of her fundamental doctrines, and refuse to join in her public worship." The writer who brings this charge finds it necessary, in order to secure even the shadow of proof, to premise, that, under the term doctrine, he includes not only that which is pre-emptive in discipline. He then goes on to state that we have departed from that fundamental doctrine that no ordination is valid but that which is episcopal; from the fundamental doctrine of baptismal regeneration; and from the ancient rule and prescribed usage that the Lord's supper shall be administered by Episcopal Ministers only. But this novel definition of fundamental doctrines, will have the effect of proving many Bishops, and some Archbishops, to have been separatists equally with the Methodists; and with that remark we shall dismiss it. When the writer shall have settled his account with those Clergymen and rulers of the Church, who have maintained that these points are not included among her doctrines at all, (and how much less among her fundamental doctrines!) it will be time enough for us to reply to him. As to our refusal to join in her public worship, we refer him to what has been already said with regard to holding services in Church hours during Mr. Wesley's life. If that practice was not then considered to be such a refusal, it cannot be so now; and the charge built upon it falls to the ground, of course.

We have thus endeavoured to refute the calumnies brought against us at the present day. And in order that this controversy might not degenerate into a mere strife of words, we have forbore to insist on that distinction between Mr. Wesley's plans and his principles, at which some writers are so highly displeased. Let them insist on the absurdity of that distinction, if they will: let them call it dishonest, sophistical, or whatever they please: the case remains unaltered. They must show that his declared attachment "on principle" to the Established Church, and his reiterated refusal to separate from it, ought not to be limited and explained in the manner attempted above; or they must grant that in none of these instances have we introduced a new principle into the administration of his system. The law on which he invariably acted of regarding the interests of religion as supreme, and those of the Establishment or of Methodism but as secondary, is still, and we humbly trust will ever be, the great law of our denomination. We know with the utmost certainty, that "love is of God," and that "every one that loveth is born of God." But we cannot say as much of any system of Church order; and therefore, as we are more certain of the divine authority of experimental and practical religion than we can possibly be of any Church system, that of Methodism not excepted, we held it to be strictly philosophical, may more, to be strictly scriptural, and in the highest degree meet and right, and our bounden duty, to be more zealous for experimental and practical religion, than for any Church whatever. Show us that any of our doctrines, rules, and practices are at variance with scriptural religion, and obstructive of it, and they will soon "cease and determine." But while we are convinced not only that they are in accordance with piety, but better calculated to promote it than those of our fellow-Christians, we must be allowed to hold them fast. And upon this truly Wesleyan principle we meet the cla-

morous cry for an immediate return to ecclesiastical regularity with a direct refusal. We are willing (in the words of Mr. Wesley, to Mr. Moore at his ordination) to continue "united to the Established Church, so far as the blessed work in which we are engaged will permit." But the claims of that work must be first satisfied. And in order to a right estimate of those claims, the altered circumstances of our time must be taken into account. Mr. Wesley found the Establishment asleep. He and his coadjutors succeeded in awaking her; and, for a time, her renewed strength was put forth in a legitimate direction, and with happy results. But suddenly things have taken a new turn. Popery, with a few unimportant modifications, is introduced into the bosom of the national Church, and spreads east, west, north, and south, almost with the rapidity of lightning. Dr. Pusey himself admits that a "crisis" has arisen; and Bishop Wilson writes from Calcutta, "I am full of fear, every thing is at stake!" A party is formed to unprotestantize England: they avow that they are in a conspiracy for this object, and glory in it. One of the members of this conspiracy becomes a candidate for an office in the University of Oxford, and six hundred members of that University abet his pretensions, and promise him their assistance. Every nerve is strained to secure the success of this conspiracy. Every department of literature, and every walk of art, is laid under contribution for its advancement, and no money is spared to bring about the overthrow of that "odious Protestantism which now sticks in people's gizzards." Is this a time then for Methodism to withdraw from the field of her exertions? No! "The blessed work in which we are engaged will not permit it!" For their country's sake, whose bright glory must be tarnished by that inevitable restoration of "Popish tyranny and arbitrary power" which would follow in the train of High-Church success; and for the sake of religion, which must decline and wither amidst the triumphs of a cold and superstitious externalism; for the sake of universal human nature, whose advancing improvement it is proposed to check by a return to the doctrines and manners of the fourth century; and above all, for His sake whose we are, and whom we serve, whose smile has cheered us hitherto, who discerns our motives accurately, and will judge us righteously at last, for JESUS'S sake, we will not hold our peace,—for CHRIST'S sake, we will not be silent.

But here we are met by another objection. "The efficiency of the Church" continues the "Layman" "depends upon its unity; and by violating that unity, you are obstructing the progress of the truth. Methodism is not only a breach of unity itself; but, more than any other system, it has been a fruitful source of divisions; the name of its sectarian progeny is Legion, for they are many; and most injuriously has this multiplication operated to increase the unbelief of the world." Surely the writer of this must be a Jesuit in disguise, who hopes that when he has assisted the Establishment to put down Methodism, he shall conquer her with her own weapons. Not could she resist the attack. She made the first breach of unity by separating from Rome; and she is as much responsible for all the denominations of Dissenters in England, as the Methodists are for the unhappy separations from their body which have taken place at various times.

But not to pursue this line of argument. We deny that the efficiency of the Church depends upon such a unity as those men contend for; namely, submission to the same form of government and external order. There was little enough to break this unity a hundred and ten years ago, when Methodists had no existence, and Dissenters were few, formal and inactive.

But will any man in his senses say that the Establishment was as efficient then as even now? We believe and affirm, 1. That the efficiency of any church is much more dependent on the correspondence of its teaching with Scripture, and with its own standards, than on its correspondence with other churches in discipline; and that in this regard a vast advantage pertains to us Methodists. Within the pale of the Establishment there exists three schools of theology, (in plain English, three sects,*) the Evangelical, the old Orthodox, and the new High Church, whose respective votaries divide her preferments among them, from the Land's End to the Tweed. Yet, with a singular inconsistency, they reproach us for having committed, and for still maintaining a breach of unity. They seriously quote against us the Scriptures which speak of the importance of being of one mind, and speaking the same thing, and which exhort Christians to mark them which cause divisions and offences! Who that has not his eyes hermetically sealed, can forbear to reply, "Physician, heal thyself." Make Dr. Faussett and Mr. Newman, Dr. Pusey and Dr. Hampden, of "one mind," at Oxford,—reconcile Professor Scholesfield and Mr. Colburn, at Cambridge,—bring Mr. Sydney Smith and Mr. Archdeacon Hale to be perfectly joined together in one mind, and in one judgment, at St. Paul's,—and Dr. Hook and Mr. Baptist Noel to "speak the same thing" at St. James's,—and "mark" the Bishop of London and the Bishop of Norwich, when they contradict or another in the House of Lords, concerning the foundation of the Church of England, as persons who "cause divisions and offences, and avoid them;" and then we may the better listen to your grievous charges of a breach of unity brought against us. But, thirdly, the unity of love upon which the Church does depend for its efficiency, these men are doing all in their power to destroy. "With Dissenters in religious matters I can have no fellowship whatever," quoth Dr. Hook, upon entering into his vicarage of Leeds; and his brethren are beginning to act out as principles very extensively. They cannot join in prayer with them; they will not recognize them as Christians in any way; and often scruple to render, if they do not refuse them the ordinary courtesies of life. A pitiful bigotry scowls upon us as schismatics while living, and insults the ashes of our dead, and then upbraids us for our want of love,—our most lamentable breach of unity! Did ever infatuation rise to such a height before?

Mr. Wesley said on one occasion, that he chose to remain in the Church, that he might bear witness against those who were eating her bread, and tearing out her bowels. On the same principle, we choose to remain where we are, that we may the more effectually bear our testimony against the bigotry and exclusiveness which threaten to bring ruin upon the Establishment from without, and the false doctrine which threatens it from within. We will not strengthen the hands of those, who, if their pretensions were not checked, would engross every particle of English liberty.

* The "Layman of the Established Church" thus remarks in the argument contained in No. 1. "Among sects there is necessary, for as you properly say, some unity; but the amount of your difference ought to be such as to cause you not to be separated by the word of God, which is not emphatically decreed by our divine Lord." &c. &c. &c. I insist you to apply the scriptural tests, by which your system is tried, and found wanting, to the Church which bears on one side that of her ancient Head &c. &c. &c. It therefore becomes necessary to remind the reader, 1. That differences have always existed and do exist in the Establishment, as well as out of it, and differences as great as any that can be supposed, e. g. the difference between Bishops Hall and Hoole, and between Drs. Clarke and Waterland. 2. That allowing this, (and it cannot be denied,) the practice of conveying the amount of our difference in a word, is every way preferable to the practice of cloaking them under an ambiguous generality. The conduct of the sects out of the Establishment is not only more consistent, but much more honest, than that of the sects within.

nor will we uphold, in their authority, the Messengers of another Gospel, lest, by bidding them God speed, we should become partakers of their evil deeds.

It would be unjust to our cause to omit some further observations suggested by the pamphlet to which reference has more than once been made in these pages.

1. The author of "modern Methodism" has wholly mis-stated the question at issue. He makes the Methodist, in his dialogue, contend that though we "have formed ourselves into separate societies, administer the sacraments, and have our services in Church hours, we have not departed from the principles of our founder, because Mr. Wesley's opinions underwent an entire change on this point." And again he introduces him as saying, that the impression left on his mind by the perusal of Tract No. 1, was, that Mr. Wesley's opinions underwent a real change with regard to continuing in the communion of the Church, after he had read Ford King's book, (p. 21.)

He then proceeds to show, by means of nearly forty pages extracted from Mr. Wesley's Works, that to the end of his life he did not, and would not, separate from the Church; and having thus established what was never denied, he claps his wings in triumph, and retires.

Now, however stupid the writer of this pamphlet supposes the Methodists to be, they are at all events able to discern when a question is shifted in argument; and they therefore request attention to pages 4 to 6 of Tract No. 1. It will they apprehend, be sufficiently obvious, that "the point" on which his opinions are stated to have undergone an entire change, was, the uninterrupted succession of Bishops as the first of three orders of Ministers in the Church. What were his opinions in regard to continuing in communion with the Church, may plainly appear from the present Tract, and from other publications; and there was surely no need to heap together a mass of quotations to prove what the writer of Tract No. 1, admitted without hesitation. His words are,

"C. Did not the brothers declare that they would live and die in the communion of the Church, and that none who regarded their advice or example would ever separate from it?"

"W. They did."

We shall not retort the charge of unfairness; but proceed to show how, in another instance, a temporary triumph has been gained at the expense of the poor, simple Methodist. *The Cerygian says*, (p. 17) "This sermon (or Lib. v. 4) was written by Wesley not long before he died; he published it in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1790, and he died March 2nd, 1791." To this the Methodist responds, "I am quite surprised at this; why, as I read this passage in the Wesleyan Tracts for the Times, I thought this sermon was written in 1744." Let the reader turn to Tract No. 1, p. 8, and he will find the Clergyman there distinctly telling the Methodist both the date of the sermon, and of Mr. Wesley's death, and calling the extract attested to, "his last words." How then can the author of "Modern Methodism" represent us as leading men to believe that it was written in 1774!

2. There are not the only instances in which that writer has chosen to misrepresent us. He speaks of the Methodists as identifying excitement with religion, and as advocating excitement only, or chiefly, in public worship. He ought to have known that the preference of the Methodists is given, not to excitement as opposed to devotion, but to devotion excited, as opposed to devotion unaccompanied with excitement. Their sentiments are well expressed in the language of one who, it is hoped, may be quoted without offence, as he was a Clergyman and took a Doctor's degree at Oxford.