

CANADIAN METHODISM; ITS EPOCHS AND CHARACTERISTICS.

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ESSAY V.—METHODISM THE PIONEER OF CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY IN UPPER CANADA; COMMENCEMENT OF THE CLERGY RESERVES CONTROVERSY.

IF Methodism was the first ministry of religious instruction and spiritual freedom to the first Canadian settlers; if, under its ministrations, men were freed from the slavery of vice in every form, and made virtuous, moral, religious citizens—were turned from darkness unto light, and made partakers of the glorious liberty of the sons of God; so also was Methodism the precursor, the pioneer, the first and most effective promoter of civil and religious liberty for the entire country. The early Methodist preachers did not interfere with politics; I can find no instance of it in the whole of their history; but they taught doctrines which lay at the foundation of a country's freedom, and without which no country has ever been free. They preached the Gospel of Christ in its purity, fulness, and power; and a late writer has well observed, "Christ's Gospel did not promise political freedom, yet it gave it: more surely than conqueror, reformer, patriot, that Gospel will bring about true liberty at last. This, not by theories, nor by schemes of constitutions, but by the revelations of truths." (F. W. Robertson.)

There is a fourfold truth which lies at the foundation of all other truths of the Bible, and which involves the first elements of civil freedom.

First, God is a Spirit, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind; and the counterpart of that truth, each human being is the child of God by creation. "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the *Maker* of them *all*." "We are also His offspring." "God, that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, . . and hath made of *one blood* all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth." In the sunlight of these inspired words (words not found in the philosophy or any writings of the