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### Religious Miscellany.

#### THE MISSION OF METHODISM.

There are some critics who affect a philosophical style and deal in broad generalizations, who tell us that the Mission of Methodism is accomplished; and that there is no longer any real necessity for its existence as a separate branch of the Church of Christ. It is freely enough admitted that Methodism gave a powerful impulse to the religious life of Britain and America; that in the last century her explicit emanation of the privilege of a personal experience of forgiveness and renewal for every believer in Christ fell on the ears of the world's formalists of that day like a new revelation; and that all the Protestant churches felt, to a greater or less extent, the quickening influence of that great religious awakening. Neither is it denied that the zeal of Methodism in evangelistic work, and its disregard for canonized prejudices as to modes of operation, have greatly stimulated the energies of other branches of the Church.

But it is argued that as the offer of a present salvation, and a practical experience of its power, is no longer confined to Methodist teaching; and the revival spirit, in which Methodism had its origin, has been largely re-created by the other churches, the agency by which this was mainly accomplished may now disappear, and become merged in the general revival of the age. It is also thought by many that the peculiar organization of Methodism indicates its temporary character, and lack of the elements of permanency. By others it is urged as a general argument for union, that as most of the causes that led to division have disappeared, that the division should no longer continue when the only circumstances that justified them have passed away. This argument is pressed with much confidence by the Established Church in England, as a reason why the Wesleyans should allow themselves to be absorbed into the Established Church of England.

All these arguments are founded upon narrow and superficial apprehensions of the work and mission of Methodism. The evils against which early Methodism directed its heaviest artillery were not local and temporary. They have still a powerful existence in the world. The truths that are prominently embodied in the teachings of Methodism are still needed, and the agencies which Methodism employs are still efficient in the salvation of men. Formalism still rocks thousands to sleep in the cradle of a false and fatal security. Unbelievers still shut out from the rich spiritual inheritance which God has promised to them that believe on His Son. Sinful and depraved hearts, from which nothing but the grace of God can deliver, still hold the vast majority of our race in a cruel and debasing slavery. Surely this is no time for any desisting of the army of the living God to fold its banners, sheath its weapons, and retire from the conflict as if the victory was complete.

The vast mass of souls to whom our testimony as a church is presented, still require the great verities embraced in that testimony. Men need to be reminded that unless they repent they shall perish. The doctrine of justification by faith alone is still precious to the weary and faith-laden souls of men. The testimony of our Church to the coming of the Holy Spirit, still holds the vast majority of our race in a cruel and debasing slavery. Surely this is no time for any desisting of the army of the living God to fold its banners, sheath its weapons, and retire from the conflict as if the victory was complete.

It is not even pretended that this is the case. Until this is done we must continue to cling to the old-fashioned gospel, that in its adaptation to the nature of man, as well as in its mysterious power, vindicates its Divine origin. In our manner of presenting the truth there should be a wise adaptation to the character and circumstances of the people; but the essential truths, which constitute the message of the Gospel herald, can never be superseded. There is hope of human origin flourish and decay; but the word of the Lord endureth forever.

Their sympathy is all with the past, and with conditions that cannot be found apart from things of society that no longer exist. There may be change and modification in things non-essential, without any surrender of vital essential truth. Indeed, such adaptation to altered circumstances, is essential to progress and usefulness. For our own part, we do not believe that the former days were better than these. We do not believe there ever was as much true religion in the world as at the present time. There never was as much liberality, zeal, charity, and intelligent goodwill as now. And if Methodism held fast the form of sound words, and a living, personal experience of the gospel, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." She shall stand amidst the surging waves of change and decay.

#### THE ECUMENICAL COUNCIL.

##### BY PROF. YOUNG.

As the Council now sitting will mark one of the grand epochs of "Catholicism," it is well to note the distinctive character and present attitude of the Roman Church; we shall thus judge better of the Council, its doings and its results.

The "Catholic" must be remembered as the mother Christian Church. Its lineage is direct from the Apostles through the fathers. Under the name of "Apostolic," and in virtue of its Christian-ity had, as yet, no *Romish*-character, it has good title, in common with all Christendom, to the achievement and glories of the first centuries, and was early entitled to the distinctive title "Catholic." True, its entanglement with State affairs since the fifth century has bred monstrous corruption; its admission, in the seventh century, of the Bishop of Rome as "Universal Bishop"—growing out of the relation of the Church to Rome, as capital of the Western Empire—has entailed upon it "Popery" and "Romanism"; and the frightful class of things in Europe in the eleventh century, in which all interests, civil, social, and religious, were inextricably blended, seemingly demanding of the Church, as the greatest power, some acknowledged head, established the "Papal Supremacy," the union of the political sovereignty of the Italian States with the "head of the Church"; in the person of the Pope, has made the latter Italian, almost wholly subject to Italian influences, and the "Church" vastly more *Romish* than Catholic.

Each of these measures, with many a less important one, though approved in its time by wise men, and given through its need of life, in its countless in detail and frightful in sum, until a history alone could express their enormity and magnitude. Yet one should not forget that for a thousand years, from the fifth to the sixteenth century, this was the only Christian Church in Europe, and that, though in those thousand years, bad men often held sway in the Church, wickedness ran riot, and devils rejoiced to see the seed and still delight in the fruits of monstrous error, still there were, all these times, holy men in the Church, who saw, deplored, and opposed its iniquities, while millions upon millions, though blinded by its errors, were yet sustained by its truths, and made up the largest body of the redeemed alone. There are to-day in this *Romish* Church—still Catholic, though in some aspects scarcely Christian, wise, able, and holy men, who look for her regeneration. It is hard, though we may admit they are imposed upon, to say of her one hundred and fifty millions of communicants, lay and clergy, that they are all impostors. But it is hard too, to relieve the body of the Church, past and present, from much of the blame of its iniquitous leadership and what have you.

It is not even pretended that this is the case. Until this is done we must continue to cling to the old-fashioned gospel, that in its adaptation to the nature of man, as well as in its mysterious power, vindicates its Divine origin. In our manner of presenting the truth there should be a wise adaptation to the character and circumstances of the people; but the essential truths, which constitute the message of the Gospel herald, can never be superseded. There is hope of human origin flourish and decay; but the word of the Lord endureth forever.

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