

liberality and zeal in sustaining and propagating the Gospel, were landed to the skies. Methodism had now a name to live, and, which is far better, it was truly alive: alive to God, alive to duty, alive to the claims of a perishing world.

Now, I do not say that Methodism has fallen from this high dignity; I do not say that it has lost all its vitality and become but "a whited sepulchre;" but I *do* say that it is now passing through the most perilous part of its history. It is now engaged in working out the problem whether it is possible for a church enjoying a large measure of worldly prosperity, and moving in the enervating atmosphere of popular favor to preserve intact its spiritual vitality and power. I do not say it cannot be done: we "can do all things through Christ Jesus strengthening" us; but if Methodism succeeds in this experiment, and, *as a church*, maintains its spiritual life unimpaired, it will be the first instance of the kind in the history of the world. What says ecclesiastical history? It says that the primitive Church possessed the largest amount of vitality while enduring the most grievous persecutions; that although many of its adherents "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings," and many more sealed their testimony with their blood, yet that blood fell as dew upon the truth, and made it flourish the more. But when, instead of its single-hearted trust in God it leaned on the arm of imperial Constantine,—when, instead of worshipping on mountain sides and in dens and caves of the earth, its worship was performed in stately temples led by gorgeously apparelled priests, the life and power of Christianity speedily departed, and the pure light of inspired truth was quenched by the darkness of the most dreadful apostacy that ever shut up the kingdom of heaven from men. And when, after centuries of darkness, the light of truth again dawned upon Europe, the Church, though feeble and persecuted, possessed a vitality against which the power of Rome and of the Empire was exerted in vain. But when persecution abated, and Protestantism was recognized by law, the purity of its doctrines and the spirituality of its worship were soon supplanted by abounding error and almost universal formality. Let me not, I repeat, be misunderstood. I do not say that a church to be pure in doctrine, in discipline, and in life, must be both poor and persecuted; but I do say that with every increase of outward prosperity comes increased peril, and that the enjoyment of peace and of the world's favor should be regarded as a loud call to redoubled watchfulness, and tenfold zeal.

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CONSCIENTIOUS LIBERALITY.—John Frederick Oberlin, a minister of the gospel in France, happening to read one day, with more attention than usual, the accounts of the tithes in the books of Moses, was so struck with some of them as to resolve from that moment to devote three tithes of all he possessed to the service of God and the poor. The resolution was no sooner made than put into execution, for whatever Oberlin conceived it to be his duty to do, he conscientiously and without delay set about it. From that period till the end of his life, even during the most calamitous seasons of the Revolution, he always scrupulously adhered to the plan, and often said that he abounded in wealth.