

CANADIAN METHODISM; ITS EPOCHS AND CHARACTERISTICS

BY THE REV. DR. EYERSON. Written at the request of the London, Toronto, and Montreal Conferences. ESSAY III.—THE SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF CANADIAN METHODISM. (From the Canadian Methodist Magazine.) (CONTINUED.)

But it was not merely in the pure and experimental doctrines taught that the supernatural character of Canadian Methodism was demonstrated in the early stages of its development; it was also in the recognition and dependence upon the presence and power of God the Holy Ghost in every ministrations and service, public or private. Was ignorance or the darkness of the understanding dispelled? It was "God who caused the light to shine out of darkness," and "shined in the heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Was there a stirring of spiritual life, the quickening sensation of repentance? "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." Was there faith? It was the "operation" and "gift of God." Was there the act of pardon? God was present; for "it is God that justifieth." Did the believing sinner know that he was pardoned and accepted in the beloved? The Holy Spirit bare witness with his spirit that he was a child of God. Was he renewed in the spirit of his mind? Here was a new creation—making something out of nothing—the peculiar work of God. Was the believer preserved steadfast in Christ Jesus? It was because he was "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation."

Thus is the supernatural character of Canadian Methodism evinced in its every doctrine and service. In this glorious work God is the Alpha and Omega, the all in all. Though some of its apostles might plant and others water, it was God, in every case, that gave the increase. The ministrations of these devoted men was manifestly the "ministration of the Spirit;" and in deep humiliation, but assured confidence, their constant language was, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." They were well read in the Scriptures and experienced in the deep things of God. In every congregation and in every house they could say, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

Such was the divine, the internal, the experimental, the practical religion exemplified and taught by the early preachers of Canadian Methodism, and maintained by their successors. Yet, by those who were strangers to its power, it was scoffed at and ridiculed, and often persecuted. Mr Wesley himself says—"This repentance, this faith; this peace, joy, love; this change from glory to glory, is what the wisdom of this world has voted to be madness—mere enthusiasm, utter distraction. But thou, oh man of God, regard them not; be thou moved by none of those things. Thou knowest in whom thou hast believed. See that no man take thy crown. Whereunto thou hast already attained, hold fast, and follow, till thou attain all the great and precious promises."

Among those who maintained this ceaseless warfare against Methodism, as "madness, mere enthusiasm, and utter distraction," many of the clergy and some of the laity of the Church of England, both in England and Canada, occupied a conspicuous place,—aided indeed by some clergy and laymen of other religious persuasions, but much mitigated of late years; yet in no formularies of any Church are more fully recognized and especially stated the distinctive doctrines taught by the Methodist preachers of Canada than in the Articles, Liturgy, and Homilies of the Church of England.

In regard to repentance in the General Confession we acknowledge that "we are miserable offenders," and that "there is no health in us"—indicating a heartfelt sense of guilt, of depravity, of helplessness. In the Communion Service we declare that "the remembrance of our sins is grievous unto us, and the Burden of them is intolerable;" and in the Office for the Sick we pray, "Make us know and feel that there is no other name than that of Jesus whereby we may be saved." Passages, almost without number, to the same effect could be selected from the Liturgy as well as from the Homilies which are declared in the 35th Article of the Church of England to contain wholesome and godly doctrine, such as should be read in the churches. In the Homily on Fasting we have the following words: "When men feel in themselves the heavy burden of sin, see damnation to be the reward of it, and behold with the eyes of the mind the horror of hell, they tremble, they quake, and are inwardly touched with sorrowfulness of heart and cannot but accuse themselves, and open their grief unto Almighty

God; and call upon Him for mercy. This being done seriously, their mind is so occupied, partly with sorrow and business, partly with earnest desire to be delivered from this danger of hell and damnation, that all desire of meat and drink is laid apart, and loathing of all worldly things and pleasures cometh in place. So that nothing thus liketh them more than to weep, to lament, to mourn, and in both words and behaviour of body to show themselves weary of life."

And this deep heartfelt repentance is everywhere represented as the work of the Holy Spirit; producing faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, in the Collect for Ash-Wednesday we pray:

"Almighty God, who dost forgive the sins of them that are penitent, create and make in us new and contrite hearts; that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Thee present remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent and unfeignedly believe His holy gospel." And in the office of the Visitation of the Sick, the minister prays for the sick person as follows: "Give him [or her] unfeigned repentance and steadfast faith, that his [or her] sins may be blotted out." And in the Homily on the Passion, we have these expressive words: "When we feel the heavy burden of our sins pressing our souls with the fear of death, hell, and damnation, we must steadfastly behold Christ crucified with the eyes of our heart."

It will be seen by these passages from the Homilies and Liturgy of the Church of England (which might be indefinitely multiplied), that repentance and faith are not only the result of Divine influence, but precede justification or pardon.

But it is the doctrine of justification by faith and the witness of it by the Holy Spirit which has been the special object of opposition from various quarters, and especially certain clergy and members of the Church of England, who ought to have known better than to ridicule as "fanaticism" and "enthusiasm" the solemn verities of their own Church. But in this as well as in other doctrines the early Canadian preachers of Methodism were true to the principles and spirit of the Protestant Reformation—to those principles and to that spirit which commenced the career of Britain's greatness, and which have formed so vital an element in the formation of Canadian liberty and character. On no subject did the fathers and founders of the Protestant Reformation, and the greatest men who have succeeded them, more uniformly agree than on the supernatural character of the work of God in the soul of man, by which he experiences the pardon of sin, adoption into the Divine family, the witness of the Holy Spirit to his sonship with God, and his sanctification from the defilements of sin. Out of a multitude, we will adduce a few authorities.

In the Second Homily on the Passion, we have these words: "The only instrument of salvation required on our part is faith; that is, a sure trust and confidence that God both hath and will forgive our sins, that He hath accepted us again into His favour for the merits of Christ's death and passion."

Again, in the first Homily on the Sacraments: "Have a sure and constant faith not only that the death of Christ is available for all the world, but that it hath made a full and sufficient sacrifice for thee, a perfect cleansing of thy sins, so thou mayest say with the apostle, 'He loved thee, and gave himself for thee.' For this is to make Christ thine own, and to apply His merits to thyself."

But on the internal work of the Holy Spirit renewing our hearts and witnessing our sonship with God, we have testimony equally explicit and very abundant.

The Homily on Rogation Week says: "If after contrition we feel our consciences at peace with God, through the remission of our sins, it is God who worketh that great miracle in us;" and then prays that "as this knowledge and feeling is not in ourselves, and that as by ourselves it is not possible to come by it, the Lord would give us grace to know these things and feel them in our hearts."

Again, in the Homily on the Resurrection are these words: "He died to destroy the rule of the devil in us; and He rose again to send down His Holy Spirit to rule in our hearts." We have the Holy Spirit in our hearts as a seal and pledge of our everlasting inheritance.

The Homily on Certain Places of Scripture says: "Good men feel inwardly the Holy Ghost influencing their hearts with the fear and love of God, and they are miserable wretches who have no feeling of God in them at all."

The judicious Hooker says: "The Spirit which God giveth is to assure us that we are the sons of God, and to enable us to call Him our Father."

Calvin says: "Our mind, of itself, independently of the preceding testimony of the Spirit; could not produce this persuasion that we are the sons of God."

Witsun on the Creed testifies: "There is a certain instinct immediately assuring God's beloved people of their adoption."

Bishop Hooper says: "Blessed is that man in whose heart God's Spirit beareth record that he is the son of God." (To be continued.)

THE NEW HYMN BOOK.

II—ADDITIONS. SECOND ARTICLE.

There has been, in this department of work, the very decided advantage of following in the track of previous revisers. "In this compilation," says the British Committee—equally applicable to the Canadian Hymn Book—"the necessities of public worship have been first considered; and it is hoped that an ample supply of compositions suitable for mixed congregations is here furnished. Many poems of Charles Wesley, also, which up to a late period only existed in manuscript, are here presented for congregational use. The Committee have been glad to avail themselves of the labours of both contemporaries and predecessors, and accordingly the present volume is enriched by a selection from the works of modern hymnologists as well as from the accumulated labours of the past."

Considering the magnitude of the subject, and the wide range over which the selection of hymns extended, there was a surprising unanimity in result. That consentaneousness was not attained by any system of accommodation or of easy compromise. The sense of responsibility was individually realized; and there was manifestly independence of judgment and tenacity of conviction. To most members of the Committee the subject of Hymnology had been more or less one of life study. Conversation and criticism were not bounded by a solitary canon immediately applicable. They swept the whole domain of devotional psalmody. There was, in unanimity, a cheering and satisfying evidence that in this important work, He who is "Source of the old prophetic fire, Fountain of light and love," earnestly invoked, was eminently present through all these deliberations.

In the selection of additional hymns, in a book designed for permanence, it was not thought desirable to introduce modern "Gospel songs," popular melodies, and various productions of ephemeral interest. Even in this department, however, there was no adoption of cast-iron rule. Each composition was considered upon its own merits; and "Showers of Blessing," and "I Need Thee Every Hour," which have been turned to good account in evangelistic services, and are destined probably to live, have been introduced. Eminent adapted for revival services, as well as for ordinary Sabbath evening ministrations, in affinity of genius with earnest Methodist sentiment strangely overlooked in the former book, a number of old soul-stirring hymns will now find a place. As representative of this class, it may be sufficient to mention Joseph Hart's Invitation hymn:

"Come ye sinners, poor and wretched Weak and wounded sick and sore; Jesus ready stands to save you, Full of pity, love and power: He is able, He is willing: doubt no more."

Amongst the new strains from the sacred lyre of Charles Wesley will be a noble hymn on the Trinity, of the same structure as the National Anthem:

"Come, thou Almighty King, Help us thy name to sing, Help us to praise;"

an exulting song of the "sacramental host," which, though not in our Wesleyan Hymn Book, has long enriched the psalmody, and supplied language to the worshippers of other churches;—which "for rich and elevated tone" Bishop Heber admitted as "one of the most beautiful in our language."

"Head of the Church triumphant, We joyfully adore Thee; Till Thou appear thy members here Shall sing like those in glory;"

a hymn descriptive of conversion, to earlier Methodists familiar as household words: "How happy are they Who the Saviour obey, And have laid up their treasures above;" and a noble Pentecostal hymn: "Away with our fears, Our troubles and tears! The Spirit is come, The witness of Jesus returned to His home."

It would be worth a pilgrimage to hear some stanzas of this noble hymn to Dr. Gounett's tune, fervently sung by a great congregation:

"The presence divine Doth inwardly shine; The Sheshinah shall rest On all our assemblies, and glow in our breast; By day and by night The pillar of light Our steps shall attend, And convey us safe to our prosperous end."

Amongst treasured accessories for congregational worship, ample compensation for all excision, will be many

hymns found in earlier Wesleyan publications, familiar during the period of Mr. Wesley's own ministry. It may only be necessary to specify Robinson's effective hymn:

"Come thou fount of every blessing;" Shirley's

"Sweet the moments rich in blessing;" Perronet's Coronation hymn, of Methodist antecedents:

"All hail the power of Jesus' name;" Cowper's hymn of Calvary, without which no hymn book could be considered complete:

"There is a fountain filled with blood;" John Newton's familiar stanzas:

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds;" Cennick's sweet hymn:

"Thou dear Redeemer, dying Lamb, I love to think of Thee."

The fine old hymn of Williams, "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah," and some others of the same class, though not ranking high as compositions, have a meaning and power that all can feel; and they will constitute a valuable acquisition. We shall also have in our New Hymn Book, available for sanctuary worship, Mrs. Adams' paraphrase of the Bethel vision, which, as linked to a wondrous melody, has been universally adopted:

"Nearer, my God, to Thee— Nearer to Thee."

To the same source, denominational, we owe one of the very finest of modern hymns:

"In the Cross of Christ I glory, Towering o'er the wrecks of time."

Amongst the new selections will be Ray Palmer's precious hymn:

"My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary, Saviour divine;"

Keble's "Sun of my soul;" the exquisite hymn of Lyte, "Abide with me;" "Charlotte Elliot's hymn of heart-trust "Just as I am," and its companion composition, "Thy will be done"—all of which shine as gems of crystal light in the coronal of sacred song. To the great bard of the Moravian Church, James Montgomery, we are indebted for several valuable hymns including "Prayer," and "Forever with the Lord."

Few can regret the necessity for the introduction of a new or revised hymnal, which, without the loss of any valuable hymn, will render available for worship such compositions as those of Sir Robert Grant—

"O worship the King, all glorious above!" and of Bishop Heber:

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! Gratefully adorning our song shall rise to Thee. Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity!"

From recent additions to the psalmody of English Methodism we shall be able to make valuable appropriations. There shall yet roll up from our sanctuaries, in stately and exulting strain, heightened by the effect of noble music, psalms such as once were chanted beneath the brightness of the Sheshinah:

"Earth with all thy thousand voices, Praise in songs the eternal King;" and

"Raise the psalm; let earth adoring," etc.

Contributions from the psalmody of Scotland will include the Old Hundred, "All people that on earth do dwell;" a version of the 23rd Psalm, "The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;" and Bruce's paraphrase, "Behold the mountain of the Lord," with the inspiring stanza:

"The beam that shines on Zion's hill Shall lighten every land; The King that reigns in Salem's towers Shall all the world command."

It has occasionally been a cause of regret that hymns of the metrical structure of Heber's rolling missionary strain of all compositions capable of being effectively rendered in sanctuary song, were not available for ordinary worship. Unlike the trochaic vers and sixes in the Wesleyan Hymn Book, they are all accented on the second syllable, and hence their adaptation to special metre, we shall have Wordsworth's "Day of Rest and Gladness;" several parts of "Jerusalem the Golden;" and with some others, Montgomery's incomparably grand paraphrase, "Hail to the Lord's Anointed."

In a class of hymns, limited of course and yet important, of which Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light," may be regarded as a specimen, the social requirements of cultured families have been kept in view. Selections from ancient and mediæval hymns will comprise renderings of Bernard of Clairvaux, and noble translations by Dr. Neale and Irons. The oldest of Greek hymns, with its suggestive reference to infant dedication: the intensely touching and yet deeply incisive strain: "Art thou weary, art thou languid?" the simple but sublime chant: "The strain, unraised of joy and praise," the noble Te Deum—said to have burst from the lips of St. Ambrose in a moment of rapt inspiration in the cathedral at Milan—and other grand compositions,

freighted with the devotion of ages, may be expected to enrich the worship of "the Methodist Church of Canada."

THIRD ARTICLE.

III—CLASSIFICATION.

To many of our people though still commencing with "O for a thousand tongues," the most striking feature of the Hymn Book will be in the arrangement or re-arrangement of the hymns. In the matter of classification, John Wesley was the pioneer of modern hymnody. "The Hymns," he says, in prefatory note to the "Collection," are "not carelessly jumbled together, but carefully ranged under proper heads." It is not surprising that in the course of a century some modification should be found desirable; but this fact does not in the least discredit its standard value. The "Collection," in the matter of rearrangement, sustains a relation to systematized Church psalmody which places it beyond all comparison in modern railway thoroughfares, and the beautiful mechanism of the steam-engine, as compared with the earlier work of George Stephenson, many points of superiority might be specified; but no one would claim, for later improvements, the distinguished recognition very justly accorded to marvellous pioneer achievements.

The fundamental defect of former arrangement may be accounted for from the governing principle. The design of Mr. Wesley unquestionably was that "the United Societies" should be brought into affiliation with the Church of England. Acts of evangelical enterprise were, it is true, subversive of ecclesiastical theory; for, as Dr. Beaumont felicitously remarked, the Founder of Methodism, in relation to the State system, was like a man in a boat with his face to the peer; every stroke of the oar was sending him farther from it. But the impracticable idea throws luminous light of consistent law upon much that otherwise would remain inexplicable. It accounts for the absence of Adoration as a prominent section of the Hymn Book. In the ornate and elaborate services of the Establishment, and its grand liturgies of worship, there would be ample element to lofty praise. Methodist services were designed for supplementary evangelical effort; and, by right sequence, from that standpoint begin with "Exhorting sinners to return to God."

The "Collection" looks less to the comprehensive demands of public worship than to the exigencies of Christian experience. It is pre-eminently experimental: "A little book of experimental and practical divinity." The first part, of ninety hymns, contains "Exhortation," "Pleasantness of Religion," and the department of Eschatology. The second part of the "Collection," of one hundred hymns, comprises penitential subjects: "Repentance" "For Mourners," and "For Backsliders." The third part of John Wesley's arrangement, of three hundred and fifty hymns, is all devoted to experimental themes: Watching, Working, Suffering, Meeting, Parting, etc.

In the order of Providence, the great revival of religion of which the Wesleys and their coadjutors were the honored instruments, was not absorbed by, or appended to, the national system. It was organized into a distinct church; and then, in view of all the requisites of Church work and worship, came the necessity for a wider range of hymnody. Richard Watson, the impresario of whose mind was stamped deeply on the supplementary section of the Wesleyan Hymn Book, was gifted with the highest qualities of poetical taste. As the author of the "Institutes," his ideal of theological completeness was of a very perfect kind. Instead, however, of disturbing the former arrangement, and incorporating material with the "Collection," a Supplement was added. It begins, where every hymn book should, with Adoration; and, through all the several subjects, carries a unity and completeness that would be sufficient for a theological compendium. In the numerous hymn books since then compiled for the use of different denominations, with slight modification, the admirable outline of Watson, Huntington, and Jackson has been almost universally adopted.

Must we, in the direction of the earlier Supplement, and of later Wesleyan revision, and in deference to conservative sentiment and consecrated interest, abide closely by the old lines? May we not safely strike out a new course; and, by some method, seek to unify and combine the several parts into a harmonious whole? These were questions, felt at the time to be of vital importance, to be decided by the Quebec Committee. Though reluctant to disturb time-honoured arrangement, it was believed that an advantage to the whole Church, of almost incalculable worth, ought to preponderate over mere sentiment.

The outline adopted for the Canadian Methodist Hymn Book has the distinctive merit of combining the best features of Wesley and of Watson, the "Collection" and the "Supplement," of adoration, with the recently revised hymns

books of the American M... In the Creation and Jesus Christ Work; and found some hymns, and amongst the and Conversing and Invis Trust. In hymns, the of being the b Adoration. tian L fe-at hymns for C ing, Watchi Suffering, Fu of Heaven, and Instituti Lord's Day, ministry, Epp per, for whic was inadequ and compreh made. The tains the not constitute a our already r of numerical ation and Pe Social and Fi the noblest Wesley's pos Death, Judgm and this sect enriched by n other sources special occasi provided; and 14 Chants and thern in Cana

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