

CANADIAN METHODISM; ITS EPOCHS AND CHARACTERISTICS.

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ESSAY III.—THE SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF CANADIAN METHODISM.

(From the Canadian Methodist Magazine)

By the "supernatural," we mean that which is above the powers or laws of nature; we mean that which is produced by a Divine agency—the immediate power of God. But in affirming the "supernatural character of Canadian Methodism," we are far from denying or ignoring the "supernatural" in other religious persuasions who hold the doctrines of the Triune Godhead, the atonement of Jesus Christ, and the resultant work of the Holy Ghost, and who practically and experimentally incorporate these doctrines with the pardon of penitent sinners, their regeneration and adoption into the Church, or family, of the living God. These doctrines are embraced in the creed, of all Protestant denominations, except the Unitarians and Pelagians; but though these doctrines were in Protestant creeds, they were not always in Protestant pulpits or in Protestant congregations. In the commencement of Methodism in England, few of the clergy of the Established Church and few of the Dissenters preached, much less exemplified, these doctrines, though they were prominent in their creeds. But Methodism, from the beginning, in England, the United States, and Canada, gave a supreme significance and practical application to these doctrines, which have constituted the supernatural character of Methodism throughout the world. This is especially true of Canadian Methodism, with which we have chiefly to do in these Essays. Though the first ministers were "few and far between," there was perfect unity in the doctrines of faith and experience which they preached, and everywhere, by the river side or in the remote wilderness, there was but one doctrine, one faith, one experience, one joy, one fellowship, among the isolated preachers and societies, from Quebec to Detroit.

The summary of the doctrines which they preached was the natural depravity of the human heart; the atonement made by Jesus Christ as a full and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world; the offering of salvation to every individual, on the condition of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; justification by faith alone; but from the faith which justifies, good works proceed; the witness of the Spirit, which may be enjoyed by every believer attesting his sonship; and the pressing after "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord,"—followed by the doctrines of future rewards and punishments, together with the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. It will be seen that these doctrines are but the Reformation as embodied in the Articles of the Church of England, except the 17th Article, on Predestination and Election, which means Arminianism as contended by Wesley and Fletcher, or Calvinism as argued by Toplady and Shirely. These doctrines differ from those of the Calvinistic Churches, in rejecting the doctrines of absolute election and reprobation, and of the impossibility of falling from grace; they differ from the Unitarians and Socinians, by proclaiming the supreme divinity and atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ; and from the Pelagians, by holding the doctrine of human depravity—the natural corruption of the human heart, and human inability, without Divine grace, to turn from sin to holiness—teaching at the same time, that a sufficient measure of grace is given to every man to profit withal, and that through the merits of Christ's atonement full salvation is the privilege of every individual.

The doctrines insisted upon by the first preachers in Canada, as also by Mr. Wesley himself, and by his true and faithful successors of the present day, were few, in each of which the presence and exercise of Divine power was recognized and prayed for. Mr Wesley says—"I have again and again, with all the plainness I could, declared what our constant doctrines are; whereby we are distinguished only from heathens or nominal Christians; not from any that worship God in spirit and in truth. Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are three—that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door; the third religion itself."

If we consider separately and successively the doctrines preached by the ministers of Methodism in Canada, and the manner in which they were preached, we will see at once the supernatural character of Canadian Methodism, its agreement with the doctrines and spirit of the Protestant Reformation, and with those of our Lord and his apostles. When the voice of John the Baptist crying in the wilderness, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was silenced by his death of martyrdom, then "from that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And in

the first great mixed assembly on the day of Pentecost, in answer to the inquiry of the multitude, "pricked to the heart," "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" the Apostle Peter said "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And in the preaching of the Apostle Paul, who on reviewing his ministry, declares to his brethren of Ephesus that he has "taught publicly and from house to house," "both to the Jews and Greeks, Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" so the first of Wesley's "favourite doctrines" was repentance; and thus did Dr. Bange, in opening his mission to the destitute Canadian settlers of the western district of Upper Canada, take for his text Acts iii. 19, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." So also did every Methodist preacher of that day commence his mission of love and compassion to the destitute settlers. The first race of Methodist preachers in Canada were rightly called legio tonans—the thundering legion; for the thunder trumpet of their voice sounded throughout the wilderness settlements of Canada "Repent and be converted."

And the repentance, or conviction of sin, thus taught at the very threshold of their ministrations—a repentance consisting not merely of regret and remorse for past misdeeds, and a desire and determination to forsake them, but a repentance involving a consciousness of the sinfulness of the heart, the guilt and condemnation of sin, its burden and misery, dread of its punishment and struggles to be delivered from its power, exclaiming, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—this repentance, not admitted under the law of works, is the first-fruit of the Redeemer's atoning work, who is exalted at the right hand of God to give repentance and the remission of sins.

Three things are included in that repentance which is unto salvation, and which was preached by Wesley and the pioneer preachers of Canadian Methodism: 1. A holy sorrow for sin, as dishonourable to God and defiling to the soul—as ungrateful, hateful and destructive. 2. Confession of sin—a confession which is simply the language of the inward sorrow of the heart—the giving vent to that sorrow, in acknowledgments free without compulsion, ingenious without reserve, cordial without hypocrisy. 3. A turning from sin—from all sin, from every sin—turning to God. Godly sorrow flows from God, and leads to Him. Repentance unto life, is repentance towards God. The repentant heart turns to God, as the needle to the pole. The prodigal not only lamented and renounced his barlot indulgences, but returned to his insulted father. Such repentance teaches the bitterness of sin, shows the nature of pardon, prepares and melts the heart, like wax, to receive the seal of pardon.

Such is the repentance taught by Wesley, and his fellow-labourers and spiritual sons in the United States and in Canada. Such a repentance is closely and inseparably connected with faith; a faith, not a mere intellectual assent to the doctrine of redemption and all the truths of the Gospel, but a trust in the Redeemer. Repentance is the sorrowful consciousness of guilt, and a throbbing desire for forgiveness; faith is the trust of the soul in the sacrificial death of the Son of God for pardon and eternal life—it is the resting of the soul upon Christ alone for salvation. Without faith, repentance would be but the anguish of irreparable sin and folly—the gloomy foreshadowing of future punishment; without repentance, faith is the mere assent of the understanding—the heartless and perhaps reluctant submission of the judgment to facts and doctrines which cannot be successfully contradicted or reasonably doubted. Repentance gives heart and hands to faith; faith places that heart upon Jesus Christ, and clasps those hands around His cross. Faith is the vital artery of the soul; it unites the soul to Christ; it receives life from Him; it quickens the soul from death unto life. "He that believeth on the Son of God, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Hence pardon, adoption, and regeneration immediately follow upon repentance and faith. By pardon, we are delivered from the punishment and guilt of sin through the merits of Jesus Christ; by adoption, we are taken into the family of God, are dignified by His name, and made partakers of all the privileges of His children; by regeneration, we are restored to the moral image of God—we are stamped with the seal of His likeness—we are renewed in righteousness and true holiness. New faculties are not given; but the qualities, the character, the tendency of our intellectual and moral powers are changed and improved—embracing the understanding, the will, the conscience, the affections, the passions, and appetites; and prompting us still, by an ever-increasing hungering and thirsting after righteousness, until the God of peace sanctifies us wholly, preserving our whole spirit, soul and body unto the

coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Often repentance, faith, pardon, regeneration, and adoption are carried in the soul simultaneously, and sometimes nearly instantaneously.

Such is a meagre summary of the Scriptural and experimental doctrines of Canadian Methodism proclaimed in public, and taught from house to house, among the new and scattered settlers of the Canadian wilderness; and "the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord."

(To be continued.)

REVISING THE BIBLE.

DR. SCHAFF EXPLAINS THE METHODS OF THE ENGLISH AND AMERICAN COMMITTEES.

The Rev. Dr. Philip Schaff, the well-known Biblical scholar, preached last evening at St. Paul's Methodist Church, on "Biblical Revision." He told how the Bible was first translated into English, or rather Anglo-Saxon, by John Wicliffe, 500 years ago; how that version gradually became obsolete, giving place to Tindale's Bible, which was translated from the Greek and Hebrew direct. King James's version followed very closely the translation by Tindale. He told how the present work of revising the Bible was going on in England and America. The English committee of forty-seven learned professors and dignitaries was appointed in 1870. They early took a comprehensive and liberal view of the matter, and invited all the Protestant denominations of other countries to cooperate with them. The English committee, he said, has held monthly meetings in the Jerusalem chamber in Westminster. They do their work at home, taking a chapter at a time. Each one makes a revision of the chapter, and at the monthly meetings they all compare notes. They then take a vote on each proposed change, and a majority is sufficient to decide in favor of the change. But that is by no means the end of it. At the next meeting the proposed alterations are voted on again, and at that time a two-thirds vote is required. A third time the same questions are voted on, when the consent of three-fourths of all the members of the committee is required to settle the question. Exactly the same plan was adopted by the American committee, which has been holding monthly meetings in the Bible House since 1872. The English committee, as far as it has completed one book of the Scriptures, sends a confidential copy to the American revisers, who take up the English and American revisions together, and take another vote, in case the two do not agree. If they cannot agree with the English copy, they mark the corrections and return the manuscript to England. Then the English revisers take still another vote, and in case they cannot agree with the American version, both translations are preserved, to be inserted in an appendix.

Dr. Schaff said that pains were taken not to mar the idioms, the grammar and the general style of the ancient and familiar version. No change would be made that was not agreed on by the best biblical scholars of the two English speaking nations.

COVETOUSNESS.

Covetousness is an insidious passion. It is a devil disguised as an angel of light. It takes the shape of prudence. It glazes its hideousness with the pretense of affection. It is a cancer that eats out many a man's heart before he knows it. It was a warning from heavenly wisdom that said, "Beware of covetousness." It is a foe against which a watch must be set. The soul must be barred against its entrance.—Once admitted, its expulsion becomes a matter of greatest difficulty. It shrinks and corrodes the heart. The more it is fed the keener is its hunger. This is a snare into which men fall heedlessly, and the end is that they are drowned in perdition. The beginning of this evil is as the letting out of water—it sweeps all before it.

ANY revival that does not cost the pastor heart struggles and deep humiliation before God, that does not embolden him to reprove sin in its most popular forms, and to lose all consciousness of the prestige of wealth and social position, will be short-lived. The church is enervated in formality and worldliness, and a revival that shall drive the honored and influential members to their knees in humiliation before God, would be like another Pentecost. But denunciation and pulpit harangues will not accomplish this work. There are few in the church who will not be moved by the close, affectionate, personal appeal of the pastor.—Michigan Ad.

ANXIETY FOR SOULS.—A true minister will not rest satisfied till he sees the unconverted in his congregation broken down into repentance for sin. With many tears, and with a heart yearning for the salvation of sinners, he will scatter, with an unsparring hand, the living coals of eternal truth upon the naked consciences of his hearers, till each is compelled to cry for him-self, "God have mercy upon me a sinner." "Save, Lord, or I perish."—Caughey.

CORRESPONDENCE.

MR. EDITOR:—We are sorry to be obliged, by the reply of Rev. Mr. Robbins in the Christian Messenger of Feb. 18th, to ask permission to appear again before the religious public, with small, disagreeable, local matter: but we have been placed by Rev. Mr. Robbins, in a false position before the readers of the Christian Messenger, and as Trustee of a church you officially represent, we cannot consent to leave ourselves, our minister and members where Rev. Mr. Robbins strives to place us all, viz: in a position of hostility to—and persecution of the Baptist denomination in this community. The very opposite to this is the case. We believe we could send you a paper signed by ninety-nine out of every hundred, of the inhabitants of Port George and vicinity, stating that before Rev. Mr. Robbins commenced his sectarian "battle," the whole community seemed to be of one heart, and soul in their religious services, and that public peace, and good will, would probably have continued to pervade the people of the place, if the Rev. Mr. R. had not appeared in the Christian Messenger charging us with both the spirit and practice, of persecution in his incorrect statement, saying,—"As soon as God gave us converts, and I baptized them in the right way? I was shut out of the meeting-house."

Now Mr. Editor before we present the proof of our former charges—allow us to note some incorrect statements in the second article of Rev. Mr. R. He does not get through with his second paragraph before he makes another glaring mis-statement he says referring to the Trustees, "My caution to Baptists is the object of a tax." Mr. Robbins may caution Baptists till the day of his death, for ought it concerns us, or for ought we need care. It is not his mis-representations touching our minister—the trustees—and the "sister of another society, said to be a Methodist." These are the incautious statements in his "cautions to Baptists," of which we complain.

In his third paragraph the writer adverts with no little asperity upon the two qualifying clauses of our charges, namely, "we honestly believe," and, "if he apply his remarks to Port George." The former of these, namely, "We honestly believe"—means—that though we believe this, yet we might be mistaken, thus giving to the Rev. Mr. R. a chance to rise and explain, and thus end the dispute.

The second "if he apply his remarks to Port George" was intended to afford another loophole through which he might pass unscathed—but inasmuch as he grasps the benefit of the doubt, and then strikes at the generous hand that presents the way of escape, and calling this kindness on our part, sophistry, and chiding us with inability to conceal it, and pretending a positive style of charge preferable, we can only say—"To Cessar thou shalt go," and have both, positive charge and positive proof.

Then Rev. Mr. R. takes up our respective charges. The 1st namely:—"As to the manner of obtaining deeds," he avails himself of the loophole and says in effect his remarks were not intended to apply to Port George Deed—which explanation we willingly accept—and shall say no more at present upon his own words, upon which the charge was based, viz:—

"You may be told that the Methodists is a Body Corporate and thus in a position to hold property in trust and that it is necessary for the property to be deeded to some such Body, therefore it will be less trouble, and all right just to have it thus arranged, Be not deceived by such sophistry"

The 2nd charge namely:—"The Violation of Pledges given to other denominations as to privileges in Methodist Churches."

The Rev. gentlemen says in his second article:—"We took no more privilege than was originally promised, and when we were shut out, and the act partially sustained by the minister and trustees—I still maintain it was a violation of the original pledge."

Now as to this "original pledge" Mr. Robbins assumes, because the Trustees did not deny such "pledge" was given, therefore, it is an established fact. We have more respect for the statements of Ministers than to deny them, without the best authority—in fact we took it for granted, from the bold statements of some, that such a pledge of course had been given—until a letter from the Minister who was our "superintendent" when the church was finished, deicated and pews were sold—whose name I need not call but whose faithful, and soul saving ministry, is remembered with tenderest respect and love—and whose exposition of "Methodist rule and usage" will bear any investigation, says, "To say that a 'pledge' was given by me to the Baptists, that they should have the use of church all the time we did not need it ourselves, betrays utter ignorance or something worse, of the whole matter. No Pledge of any kind was given to the Baptists, or any other Religious Denomination. On the day of the sale of pews the question was raised, as to what

Right or Privilege, would persons of other denominations have, purchasing pews in the building. I stated distinctly that it was a Methodist Church to all intents and purposes and that persons purchasing pews would have the same right or privilege they would have if they purchased pews in any other Methodist Church or in the Church of any other denomination not their own, viz, a right to the use of their pews but none whatever to the pulpit. That matter, I said, was left entirely with the Trustees, and the Methodist Minister on the circuit. If they saw fit at any time, being on the spot, and acquainted with existing circumstances, for the time being, to open the church, as is often done for ministers of other denominations—it was in their power to do so. The late Rev. James England, Chairman of the Annapolis District, was present on the day, the pews were sold, and endorsed my exposition of Methodist law and usage bearing on such matters."

Now what becomes of this "Original Pledge" to the Baptists, we have been hearing so much about of late? It dies out in idle words, simply because such pledge had never been given, and consequently never could be broken.

Nevertheless up to the time Rev. Mr. Robbins came here the Baptists desired the use of the church once a month, and it was freely given to them. The same privilege has been conceded to Rev. Mr. R. with the additional privilege of holding Conference Meetings in it once a month, and for funerals as often as required—and yet he charges us with breaking some original pledge which never was given.

With these facts, we leave the question of "the violation of Pledges given to other denominations," in the hands of a discerning public, to form their own opinion, as to the correctness or incorrectness of the charge of "Violating Pledges given to other denominations."

Permit us to refer your readers once more to the charge of the said Baptist Minister to being shut out of the church. He says:

"I enquired of the Sexton, if he had received instruction from Rev. Mr. Smith, Methodist Minister, not to let me into the meeting house and he assured me that he had, telling me also a partial reason given by Mr. S. for so doing, &c. Subsequently Rev. Mr. Smith assured me that he had passed no words with either Sexton, or Trustee, in reference to the matter."

And Mr. Robbins closes his remarks by saying

"I leave the public to judge whether the Baptists were shut out of the church or not, and to form their opinion by whose authority it was done."

Now Mr. Editor we assured Rev. Mr. R. in our former letter it was done by the sexton—and upon his own authority, he understanding the qualifying clause in the Deed, as justifying him in the act.

But as the Rev. gentlemen does not appear to believe the assurance of our Minister—nor that of the Trustees, but appeals to the public to form their own opinion, on the subject. As an oath for confirmation is intended to put an end to all strife perhaps the following will enable the public to form a correct judgment in the case.

"Personally appeared before me, one of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace, in and for the County of Annapolis Isaac Smith (Sexton of Methodist Church at Port George) who maketh oath and testifies that he neither received orders from Rev. Mr. Smith to close the house against Rev. Mr. Robbins nor did he tell him that Rev. Mr. Smith had given him orders to do so. When questioned with regard to the matter he only replied that he had the highest authority for shutting him out till settlement was made without reference to Rev. Mr. S. or given partial reasons for the fact. ISAAC SMITH.

Sworn before me at Port George this 25th day of Feb'y, 1880. G. B. REED, J.P.

Rev. Mr. Robbins says the sexton made his statement as to Rev. Mr. Smith giving him authority to shut the church door against him (Rev. J. H. Robbins) in presence of a witness."

The following is from a young man of honest report who heard the conversation:

"Personally appeared before me one of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace in and for the County of Annapolis Henry Fitz who maketh oath and testifies, that he was within hearing when Rev. Mr. Robbins asked what authority he (the sexton) had, for shutting him (Rev. Mr. Robbins) out of the house, and in reply the sexton told him, he had the highest authority for so doing, without making mention of either Mr. Smith or the Trustees. HENRY FITZ.

Sworn before me at Port George this 28th day of Feb'y, 1880. G. B. REED, J.P.

Here we leave the readers of Christian Messenger to form their own conclusion upon the question of shutting the church door against Rev. Mr. R. Was it done by the sexton? or was it ordered and partially sustained by the Minister and Trustees?

Remembering at the same time, a Trustee's meeting was called the third day, after the sexton closed the door, and the privileges of the Baptists continued and enlarged.

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