

to his fellow men. From that period he devoted himself and his fortunes to translating and spreading the Scriptures. The result was a revival of religion, spreading over a large extent of the most enslaved portions of Europe; Italy, and the South of France. A persecution of unexampled violence was soon let loose against the converts. The reading of the Scriptures by the laity was death by fire and sword. But thousands, and hundreds of thousands, were called out of the ignorance and impurities of their age, and even in the subsequent dispersion of the Waldensian Church, a preparative was made for the birth of truth in after times.

(A.D. 1380).—Another memorable revival was to signalize the Scriptures among ourselves. England, since the decay of the National Church under the Norman line, had fallen into the most abject condition of spiritual slavery. The Scriptures were scarcely known; the Papacy was supreme. In this extremity, it was the divine will to stir the nation to Christian freedom; and the delivery of the Scriptures was, as of old, the breaker of the chain. Wickliffe, indignant at a new demand of tribute by the Papacy, had accidentally opened the Bible to ascertain the right. Its perusal immediately determined him to give the Scriptures to the people. The result was, what it had always been, a sudden and singular change of religion. Multitudes instantly changed the whole tenor of their lives. Men of every rank, from the peasant to the highest nobility, exulted in the new possession of the Scriptures, and in declaring themselves the disciples of doctrines so long lost to the nation. "The citizens of London became, for the most part, Lollards, as the Reformers were called." "The sermons of the Mendicant friars, formerly so much admired, were undervalued, and the preaching from the New Scripture made an universal impression." An influence totally beyond the ordinary impressions of moral truth, even truth of the most momentous order, was evidently acting upon the national mind. The natural impulses of Christianity were clearly propelled by a power above the course of nature; and this surge of light spread through Europe. The celebrated John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, received the doctrines from England, and proclaimed them in Bohemia, till a glorious martyrdom closed their labours. By the hand of the great English teacher, Germany was now led within sight of the Reformation.

(A.D. 1517).—Another era of memorable revival was to come; and still the delivery of the Scriptures was to be the direct instrument. In Germany, the lapse of a century, from the martyrdom of Huss, in 1415, and the furious persecution of the Bohemian reformers, had again shut up the Bible from the people; and by natural consequences, almost wholly extinguished its knowledge among the priesthood. It is well known that Luther, though from early life remarkable for vigorous study; though a member of the Augustinian order, one of the most eminent of the Roman Church; and though urged to the priesthood by strong impressions of religious awe; had never seen a copy of the Bible; till by accident, in the second year of his residence, he found one in the dust of the Conventual Library. It will be admitted, that his first summons to publicity was his indignation at the scandalous sale of indulgences. Such are the various, and apparently trivial, incidents by which God stimulates the latent mission of his servants into activity. Disdain of an insolent and burlesque traffic stung him to examine its right by the Bible in his hands. But, from that hour his career was decided. He pronounced the human doctrine of indulgences fatal to the divine doctrine of repentance; and in this spirit prepared himself for martyrdom. The first labour of his leisure, in 1522, was to supply the grand popular want, the translation of the Scriptures. The effect was immediate, and irresistible. The Papal historian acknowledges "that the translation was read by almost every one throughout Germany. Women of the first distinction studied it with the most persevering attention, and defended the tenets of the Reformation against Bishops, Monks, and Catholic Doctors." The result was the GERMAN REFORMATION; the establishment of Protestantism in the most learned, vigorous, and civilized portions of Europe; and the liberation of our country from a spiritual slavery, which nothing but a national frenzy,

preferring evil to good, and rejecting the noblest gifts of heaven for the heaviest degradations of men, can ever fix upon the neck of the British Empire.

The mention of the illustrious Work which we this day solemnize,\* must now be limited to a few words. In the commencement of the sixteenth century, the reading of the Scriptures in English had been forbidden by royal proclamation, and the penalty of burning alive was annexed even to the possession of Tyndal's version of the New Testament. The version itself was publicly committed to the flames in Cheapside. But a powerful influence had been already exercised by its circulation, and Henry the Eighth, a capricious tyrant, who but a few years before, had burned men and women for daring to deliver even fragments of the Scriptures in English, was prevailed on by Crommer, to sanction a general translation. On the 4th day of October, 1535, the whole Bible was published in the national language, by Coverdale.

The popular rejoicing on this high occasion was unbounded. An order had been issued that every Church should possess a copy; and the people crowded the Churches day by day to see and read the sacred volume. They were not yet suffered to purchase it for their houses, nor was this permission given until four years after, but it was then received with universal joy. Many sold their valuables to purchase a Bible. Those who could not afford to purchase the whole, carried away a part. Many learned to read in advanced years, that they might know the Scriptures for themselves; and multitudes of all ages crowded round the readers, who stood in the public places of London, and the country, to repeat portions of the book, which the nation justly felt to be the book of truth and immortality.

In this slight recapitulation of the Biblical career through human hands, all the facts are of the most common notoriety. And the sequence of cause and effect is as notorious, as it has been unremittably sustained. In every instance of public honour to the Scriptures, in every national acknowledgment of their importance, without exception, an extraordinary and palpable result has followed, in the express form of a national revival of religion. And the evidence has been always so direct, distinct, and immediate; that, making all allowance for novelty or enthusiasm, the calmest judgment is forced to the conclusion, that a more than mortal hand had been there.

Every man's experience tells him how slowly truth, of any kind, operates on the general understanding. Every teacher of Christianity painfully knows how feebly the operation of the highest truths acts upon the leading habits of the world. Yet here have passed before our eyes a long succession of the most powerful changes, amounting to national conversions, effected with a rapidity unexampled in any other truths and times; the difficult, unworldly, self-denying, commands of Christianity, adopted with the quickness of intuition, and retained with the tenacity of a second nature; innate prejudices, old habits, the indulgences of the present, the prospects of enjoyment, opulence, and eminence, cheerfully exchanged for danger, exile, and privation, even to death; the whole various and intractable material of the world of society—the arrogant, the violent, the prodigal, the self-willed—suddenly melting down, and shaping itself into humility and purity, before the intense splendour of the Scriptures. Yet, even in those phenomena of a superior influence, the analogy of the Divine government is not strained. It is perfectly consistent with the obvious rules of the Divine action, that peculiar strenuousness in doing its will should be assisted by more than the natural help to the success of virtue; that there should be a superadded benediction, a more than proportionate strength to the strong, an influx of sacred wisdom, incapable of being earned by the noblest human application of the mind. "For unto every one that hath, shall be given, and he shall have abundance." Or can it be presumptuous to suppose, that obedience to the Divine Will, in a form of the most unquestionable benevolence to man, and the most direct homage to Heaven—the propagation of the Gospel—entitles man to take the unrivalled rapidity, power, and comprehensiveness, of its success, for evidences of the Divine interposi-

tion; and to feel that, to defaming His word in its day of adversity, and spreading it through the world in its day of triumph, we are, with whatever of human frailty, fighting under the shadow of the King of Kings.

A new delivery of the Scriptures has signalized our own time—a delivery whose extent, vigour, and capacities of growth, have been unequalled since the days of the Apostles. It is now but in progress—its results are yet to come. But, if there be truth in the unbroken experience of two thousand years, or, still more, in the promises of prophecy; those results will inevitably come, and they will shake the throne of superstition from the four corners of the world.

### Wesleyan Methodism.

#### EFFECTIVE AGENCIES OF METHODISM.

(From the *Constitutional Sermon* of the Rev. W. Adams, on (June 21st 1841).)

Concluded.

5. *Its rich agencies.* In addition to its regular ministry, there are numerous auxiliaries. Some are partly secular; as Trustees of chapels, with their Stewards; Poor Society, and Circuit Stewards; Collectors, Secretaries, and Treasurers connected with various institutions of charity, and the spread of the Gospel. There are others whose vocation is altogether spiritual; as Local Preachers, Class and Prayer Leaders. Every person who becomes a member of the family is drawn into distinction, invested with some importance, placed in a position for mental and religious improvement, and frequently introduced to a sphere of active usefulness; for the feeblest can speak either of or for God. Here is work for every man, and a man for every work. It is Christianity in good earnest, and each will feel a lively interest in the department to which he belongs, and will exert his best energies to promote its success. Vigour is given to every wheel of this wonderful machine. What a variety of gifts, natural and acquired talents, must this interesting economy have called into exercise, to awaken and convince, to console and confirm! How many has it drawn from obscurity, and raised to eminence and usefulness! How many rude and rough intellectual blocks has it hewn out of their native rock, shaped into form, given more or less of polish, laying bare some of the finest mental beauties; and has then wrought them into corner-stones, or placed them as pillars in the temple of God! This, Methodism has done; but this it could not have done, had it not been itself Christianity.—Nor does it reject female agency, but cheerfully avails itself of the mild influence of woman's piety and power. Females as public teachers, Wesleyanism never legalized, or gave them an accredited sanction: in a few rare instances, it has silently tolerated and reluctantly endured them. But in a private capacity, and especially among their own sex, it has both encouraged and employed female piety and talent, and that with great success; opening to them such a field for the useful exercises of both, as no other Christian society, not even that of "the Friends," could furnish.—This family is rich in agencies, to which God "has given, some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

6. *Its constitutional advantages.* This is a striking peculiarity of Wesleyanism, which has very considerably contributed to its usefulness and spread, and may yet contribute to its perpetuity. This grand union is one of sentiment and affection, of effort and prayer, of strength and ability. Exceeding those in the United States, (and the same great principles are held by them,) Methodists are one body throughout the world. They have the same doctrine, discipline, and usage; the same laws, government, and bond. Every member belongs to some class; every class is a part of some society; every society is united to a circuit; and every circuit is under the care and jurisdiction of the Conference; which, like the head of the human body, can exercise its volitions, and direct the movements of every member placed under the control of the will. This union has many advantages: it preserves the purity of the Wesleyan doctrines; seeing that every Minister is examined twice a year,

as to whether he believes and practices them. Thus the chapels are so settled, that the Trustees can only receive into them such Preachers as are approved by the Conference; but should the Conference appoint to any chapel a Minister who advances doctrines contrary to those contained in the standard writings of John Wesley, the Trustees, by their deed, are required to impeach him, on a charge of false doctrine; and if found guilty, they have power, and it becomes their duty, to exclude him from those chapels. Hence they cannot become Arminian, Socinian, or Calvinistic, nor can one Preacher be found contradicting the doctrines of another. The Conference being so wide, it opens a vast field for raising a supply of pious and able Ministers, to fill the place of those who may have retired, and to extend the work. Here are opportunities for the development of intellectual and moral worth; a sphere is opened for its exercise and improvement, where it is certain to be discovered, and brought under the cognizance of the officers of the body, and had it not been for this characteristic of Methodism, the church and the world might never have known either Samuel Bradburn or Adam Clarke.

Nor is its ministerial variety of small advantage. In a body so large, there must be a wondrous diversity of gifts and graces, especially as they are formed on no model, but that of nature. They are the learned, the judicious, and the eloquent, the plain and unpretending, yet solid and useful; the doctrinal, experimental, and practical Preachers. Among its apostles have been a youthful Timothy, and "Paul the aged," a Boanerges, and a son of consolation, among its seers, the lofty, sublimely figurative, and evangelic Isaiah is found in Richard Watson, and the weeping prophet in John Murray, while something of the old, and a little of every thing singular and good, was seen in the bland and fascinating John Gaultier. By its itinerant system, there is such a change of Ministers, such a distribution of all these gifts, that, in a measure, all in course receive a share, and this tends much to keep up the interest, enlarge the congregations, and make the societies lively. And further, the union forms a mighty source of pecuniary supply. The Methodists, as a body, are not generally rich, certainly many of them are poor; few, comparatively, can give much; but all can and will give something, and when brought to act together, on the Corinthian "one and all" plan, as by this union they can be so brought, the result is astounding. Had it not been for this, Methodism would not have had the means of introducing the Gospel into so many dark, neglected portions of our own country, of building up many chapels, and of relieving those in distress, of raising eighty thousand pounds in one year for the support of Missions, and subscribing two hundred thousand pounds in the same year to the Centenary Fund, besides supporting various local charities. To a stranger, this constitutional union would appear like the machine of Archimedes. "Give it but a place whereon to stand, and it will move the world." So when Wesleyans have had any national grievance of which to complain, when any legislative measure of a character injurious to religion has been in progress; they have been brought to unite as one man in petitioning Parliament; and so many hands and voices were raised, and by such a description of persons, as gave them power and influence in the state. This was proved in their opposition to two evils,—Lord Edmond's bill, and negro slavery. Such influence, however, should be seldom and very cautiously exercised, on great questions only, and that when they have a directly religious bearing; otherwise it may be weakened and lost. But this union is of far greater importance in affording the means of combining the whole Conference to petition heaven; by appointing days of humiliation, fasting, and prayer, that God would give the appointed weeks of harvest, attend the pastures, or especially revive his work, when not only two or three, but a hundred thousand, agree to ask some blessing of God, in accordance with his will, their prayers must be effectual and prevailing. When your constitutional advantages are so many and so potent, so wonder that your feet have directed their heaviest artillery to bear on and break down this union; from the innumerable attempt of Lord Edmond, to the puny efforts of modern constitution-makers. They seem to know your priv-

\* The Translation of the Bible into the English Language.