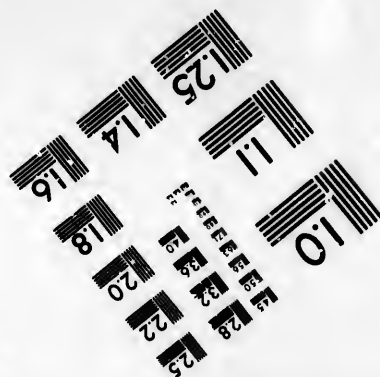
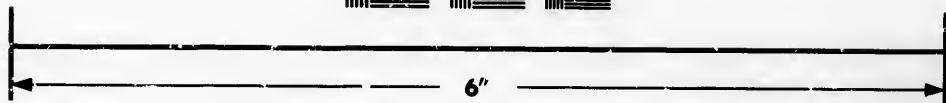
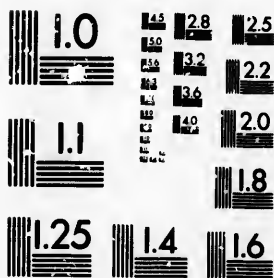


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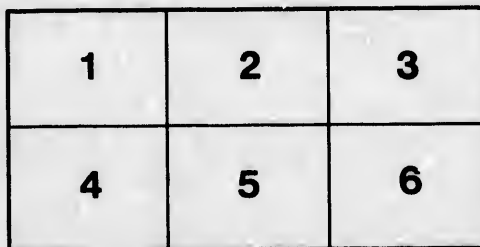
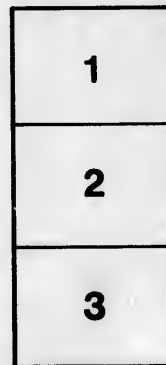
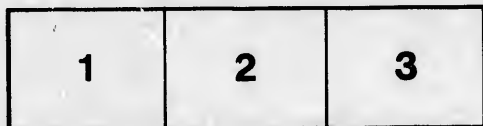
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# COUNSELS

TO

# YOUNG CONVERTS.

ABRIDGED

*From Dr. Wise's "CONVERT'S COUNSELLOR."*

BY

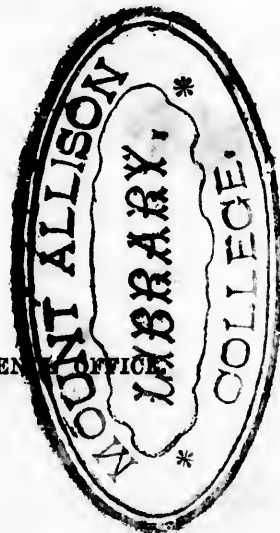
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TORONTO:

PRINTED AT THE WESLEYAN CONFERENCE OFFICE

1871.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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PHYSICS 309



## PREFACE.

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THIS little volume is intended to meet a common want. It is intended to supply those who have been led to Christ through the instrumentality of Methodism, with wholesome counsel in regard to their church relations, and, at the same time, to meet some of the objections to Methodism so freely made use of by those who are always anxious to proselyte members from her communion.

The book of which this is an abridgement, has been in circulation for many years; but its usefulness, so far as this country is concerned, has been hindered

by two circumstances : 1. Its size ; and 2. The large quantity of matter in its pages applicable only to Methodism in the United States. With a view of adapting it to general circulation in Canada, this abridgment has been made. Everything essential to the line of argument and illustration has been retained ; but enough has been omitted to bring the volume into moderate compass, and to place it, as regards cost, within the reach of all.

A. S.

MAY, 1871.

## COUNSELS TO YOUNG CONVERTS.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### DUTY OF CONVERTS TO JOIN THE VISIBLE CHURCH.

CHRISTIAN reader, will you give me your attention, and permit me to commune with you awhile, in the spirit of a friend and fellow disciple? We are strangers to each other in the flesh, but are we not united in holy brotherhood, through our mutual faith in Jesus? Do not our hearts beat in hallowed sympathy, as we bow together, in spirit, at the feet of Him whose death was our life, whose love is our consolation, whose promises are the light of our steps? Accept, then, my hand, with a brother's heart in it. Give me your confidence. You are a young pilgrim just entering the way of life. I en-

tered that sacred path in my youth. For nearly twenty-five years I have journeyed in it. I have mingled much with men, have seen life in many phases, have enjoyed much, suffered much. I know somewhat, therefore, of the human heart, and have gathered some of the fruits of experience. Viewing you as a convert just entering upon novel experiences, subjected to manifold temptations, doubtful of yourself, anxious to do right, yet liable to be misled, I feel my heart warm toward you, and am desirous to give you such counsels as I *know* will benefit you, if you accept and follow them. Will you, then, give me your attention and confidence?

I address you as recently converted, but as undecided concerning your church relations. You have been led to Christ, I will presume, through the instrumentality of Methodism. If left to your own unbiased judgment, you would unhesitatingly unite with the Methodist church. But your associates, relatives, or personal friends are perhaps hostile to Methodism. Perhaps you

reside in a community where Methodism is despised by proud, influential, sectarian men. False views of Methodism, the offsprings of a prejudice which is willingly ignorant of its true character and spirit, are whispered in your ears. So much is said to you, by persons you have ever esteemed, that your mind is perplexed and unsettled. You hesitate and wait. You do not feel entirely free to relinquish Methodism. You are too deeply indebted to it to turn from it readily ; yet in consequence of what has been said to you by others, your mind is not satisfied with respect to your duty to enter into church relation with it. Like a weaver's shuttle, you are tossed to and fro, and amid these perplexities, you are tempted to join no church at all.

Permit me, my dear young friend, to be plain with you at this point. The suggestion to join *no* church is from the great adversary of your soul. The friends who harass you that they may alienate you from Methodism, are responsible for so disturbing your wonted serenity as to fit you for the



solicitations of the tempter. But you must resist him, nevertheless. You *must* join some branch of the visible church of Christ. Not to do so is to peril the safety of your soul.

Some time ago, a bold but reckless seaman determined to attempt the passage of the Atlantic alone in an open boat. It was a daring thought, but he was strong in purpose, and he made the trial successfully. Alone in his frail bark, he crossed the mighty deep, braved all its dangers, outrode its storms, and landed safely on the opposite shore.

Since then, a noble steamship, like leviathan for size, like the eagle for swiftness, like behemoth for strength, while attempting the same passage, rushed upon an unseen vessel. The concussion opened the steamer's gigantic bosom to the waves, and like a dead monster of the deep, she sank, with scores of her affrighted voyagers, to the invisible caverns of the seas.

Thus a voyage which was safely made by a solitary seaman in an open boat, proved

fatal to scores who attempted it in a noble steamship. But would you, therefore, prefer the open boat to the steamer if you were about to cross the ocean ?

You would not. Reasoning upon these facts, you would say, that the seaman in the open boat was foolhardy. The probabilities were all against him. His exploit is not fit to be imitated, for it could hardly be repeated by himself or any other man. Of the steamship, you would say the few who perished by her fatal mishap were exceptions. Most who cross the seas in such vessels do so with safety, and, therefore, the steamship is infinitely preferable to the open boat.

Do you not perceive the application of these illustrations to the question which now perplexes you ? Do you think of sailing over the sea of life alone, without the fellowship of the visible church ? Behold the folly of such a purpose in the rashness of that daring seaman. Like him, you may, after many frightful experiences, land safely on the bright shore beyond. But alas, all the probabilities are against you. You are

more likely to be wrecked beneath some treacherous wave, than to outsail the perils of the voyage. Thus reason points you toward the church. Experience directs to the same path. Of the many who have attempted a voyage to heaven out of the Christian church, nearly all have lost their way, while yet almost in sight of the point of their departure. On the contrary, though some who join the visible church, do, like "HYMENEUS and ALEXANDER," make shipwreck of faith, yet the far greater number outride every storm, and land safely on the shore beyond the flood. All experience declares in favor of the safety of seeking heaven by way of the church: it shows the attempt to reach it independent of the church to be perilous in the extreme. Hence your desire to make your salvation as sure as possible, if guided by the voices of reason and experience, will lead you to unite with some branch of the Christian church.

The existence of the visible church, erected and preserved by Christ himself, is

a divine proclamation, that through its sacred portals the only safe path to heaven runs. Would Jesus have founded it, joined his first disciples to it, called it his "body," "loved it," and preserved it, as by a perpetual miracle, even against the "gates of hell," if it were not necessary to the salvation of his followers? Did its institution spring from the suggestions of caprice, or was it the outgrowth of his wisdom and love? *You* will surely acknowledge it to be the latter. How, then, can you neglect to join yourself to it, without despising his wisdom, exhibiting a measure of *self-will* utterly unbecoming in a disciple, risking your salvation, and exposing yourself to the fate of him whose scornful rejection of the wedding garment overwhelmed him with speechless shame, when he was arraigned at the tribunal of his offended Lord?

Nor can you refuse to join the visible church without at least a show of unkindness, utterly inconsistent with that love for Christ which you profess. It is the nature of love to yield itself to the wishes of its

object. Love is obedient. It does not hesitate to do, to suffer, or to die, if need be, to please its beloved. What a poor starveling your love will appear, if you decline to submit to the undoubted will of Christ on a point which, while it requires no real sacrifice, is almost absolutely necessary to your salvation. Your refusal must at least expose your profession of love to merited suspicion.

Besides, if you stand unconnected with the visible church, how can you "eat the body" and "drink the blood" of Christ? "*Do this in remembrance of me,*" is not a mere request: it is a *command*. If it were only a whispered wish, your affection for Christ should lead you to regard it as an imperial law. But it is more than a wish. It is an unconditional command, invested with peculiar sacredness, because given on the eve of that awful hour, which witnessed the dying agonies of your Saviour. A wish to evade it is treason to Christ. *You cannot therefore desire to neglect it. But how can*

you obey it unless you become a member of the visible church? for it is not a secret commemoration of his death that he requires, but an open partaking of its emblems in the company of his disciples. Are you not therefore bound to become a member of the visible church, by the command which bids you partake of the holy supper?

It is not uncommon for converts, harassed as I suppose you to be, about their church relation, to be tempted to say: "I would join the church if their was only *one* denomination. But I am confused because of the multitude of sects, claiming to be churches of Christ; therefore, I will join none."

Fallacious conclusion! Behold its folly. Yonder is a man intending to cross the seas. Seeking a ship, he finds the wharves crowded with every variety of craft—schooner, brig, ship, clipper, and steamship. The owners of each insist on the superiority of their particular vessel. After hearing their pleas, the intending voyager exclaims, "There are

so many vessels, I am confused. I know not which to select. I will sail in neither of them. I will *swim* across the seas alone!"

Now, I know you pronounce this resolution absurd in the highest degree—too absurd for any sane man to adopt. Common sense, you think, would teach such a man to select that craft which his judgment, after due examination, most approved. Exactly so. Go then, beloved convert, and follow the dictates of sound common sense with respect to the multitude of sects around you. Their number and variety result from the necessary diversity of human opinions; and, constituted as the human mind is, their multiplicity is probably a good rather than an evil. Let not this fact stumble you, therefore, but after a due investigation of their respective claims, select the one which your judgment can best approve, and join yourself to its communion. Remember your safety, your duty, your obligations to Christ, all bind you to become a member of the visible church.

"And THE LORD ADDED to the church daily such as should be saved."

"I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."





## CHAPTER II.

### METHODIST CONVERTS SHOULD JOIN A METHODIST CHURCH.

I HAIL you, dear reader, as a *child of Methodism*. Your parents may have educated you in a different faith. Your past associations may have been with the followers of another creed. Your personal friends may worship at other altars. Nevertheless, having been converted to Christ through Methodist instrumentalities, *you* are a child of Methodism! God sent Methodism to you, as he sent Ananias to Saul of Tarsus, that it might become your spiritual parent. It found you a poor unawakened sinner. It alarmed you, persuaded you, led you to the cross, taught you how to believe, encouraged your first acts of trust, and led you, with the solicitude of a mother, through the earliest steps of your experience in the

way of faith. Under God, you owe your spiritual life to it. Are you not, then, one of the children of Methodism? Is not the Methodist church your spiritual mother?

Did it ever strike you that there is a *providence* in this delightful relation between you and Methodism? It must be so, for so important a fact as your spiritual parentage could not have been left to *chance*. As a Christian, you utterly eschew the notion of chance. You recognize the guiding hand of God in every event, both great and small, from the upholding of the spheres to the fall of a sparrow. You must, therefore, concede that providence was directly concerned in bringing you into your very interesting relationship with Methodism. Perhaps a little reflection, on the various steps by which you have been led, will unfold to your mind numerous combinations of events, all tending to this result, and demonstrating the presence of an invisible but Almighty agency. Can you explain the facts of your recent history on any other principle? If you deny it, are they not

## 22 METHODIST CONVERTS SHOULD JOIN

mysterious and inexplicable — a tangled labyrinth which you cannot explore? But if you admit it, everything, though wonderful and overwhelming, is at least intelligible and plain. Ought you not, then, to consider that the providence of God made you the spiritual child of Methodism?

But does not this fact teach its lesson? May it not shed some light on the question of your church relation? Is there no indication of the divine will in these mysterious leadings of his providence? Why did your Heavenly Father select a Methodist preacher to be the instrument of your awakening, and a Methodist altar to be the scene of your conversion? He could have led you within the sphere of other, perhaps nearer, instrumentalities. Why then did He lead you rather out of their way, and bring you into spiritual relationship with the great Methodist family, if not to teach you that your spiritual interests could be better promoted within its bosom than elsewhere? I will not positively affirm that this is the lesson of the fact, because I can conceive

of exceptional cases, in which it would not be proper for a convert to join the church of his spiritual parentage; but I do sincerely submit this question to your judgment: Do not these providences which brought you within the influence of Methodism, give at least an intimation, that it is the divine will you should fix your spiritual home within its enclosures? I beg you to resolve this question on your knees.

By uniting with the church which has been the instrument of your conversion, you will meet with a spiritual sympathy such as you can hardly expect to find in another denomination.

As a young convert you stand in special need of the *sympathy* and aid of spiritual minds. This need will continue until your experience matures, and you acquire strength through conflict and endurance. Your faith is weak and vacillating—a reed shaken by the wind. Your love, though glowing, is wavering—a flame flickering in a draught of air. In strength, you are a lamb shivering in the chilly atmosphere of an ungenial

spring. In skill to resist the Tempter, you are as an inexperienced youth walking amidst the snares of practiced wickedness. Thus feeble and harassed, you often sink into "great deeps" of despondency, where a "horror of great darkness," like that which fell on the patriarch Abraham, encompasses your trembling spirit. Then you challenge the reality of your conversion, and are ready to "cast away your confidence." Then, like a frightened child, you need to be folded in the warm breast of Christian sympathy, that your fear may be calmed, your heart cheered into a renewal of your acts of faith, by the whispers of a tender and patient brotherly affection.

Now, where will you be so likely to find this sympathy as with those who regard you as their spiritual child? They have witnessed the process of your conversion, entered into your feelings, mingled their tears with yours, struggled with you in the agonies of your penitential hour, soared with you on the wings of faith to the Mediator's feet, and blended their voices with

yours in the first songs of praise which broke from your renewed heart. Hence, they love you as the child of their labors and affections. They have confidence in your profession of faith. They are eminently fitted to sympathize with you, to weep over your sorrows and to rejoice over your joys. Is it *prudent* to tear yourself away from such sympathy? Is it *safe*?

I do not affirm that you cannot find genuine Christian sympathy in a church of another name, because wherever there is true piety there is more or less of sympathy with the lambs of Christ's flock. But I do seriously doubt the probability of your finding *such* sympathy as you now enjoy in the house of your spiritual parentage. Remember, that being a child of Methodism, you will be but an *adopted child* in any other branch of the Christian church. You will feel this fact painfully, if you leave your true home. So long as you are the object of a zealous proselytism, the confidence and sympathy of those who seek to win you to their ranks will appear strong and deep. But when you

have once crossed the Rubicon, and stand among them as a candidate for church membership, a change will be visible in the spirit of your new friends. Having lured you from Methodism, they will seek to divest you of every shred of the Methodistic garment, and to shape the manifestations of your experience in their own denominational mould. They will scrutinize your conversion, and challenge its genuineness, because it was obtained among the Methodists. It will be well if they do not lead you to cast it aside as mere excitement, and leave you to grope through mist and unbelief after new light, so that, after all, you may date your new birth from the period of your connection with them, and thus lose your sense of obligation to your true spiritual parent. But if you should escape so severe an ordeal, you will, at least, be speedily taught by significant shrugs and chilling glances, if not by direct rebuke, that allusions to your indebtedness to Methodism are regarded as a mark of bad taste, as an offence, as a sign of disloyalty to your new friends. In a word, you

will have to ignore your spiritual parentage or be regarded as a speckled bird, an oddity, to be endured but not received to the entire confidence of the church.

Perhaps you think these remarks are the outflowings of prejudice on the part of the writer. I assure you they are not. I love and respect every branch of the Christian church, and believe that multitudes among them would scorn to do such things as I have described. But facts are stubborn things; and they prove that the *animus* of not a few denominations is decidedly unfriendly to Methodism—so unfriendly as to look upon it with a certain affectation of contempt, and to speak incredulously, if not with absolute doubt, of the genuineness of its religious experiences.

How, then, can you, who are a Methodist convert, go among them without having the soundness of *your* conversion doubted? without being subjected to a suspicious scrutiny which it is painful to an honorable mind to endure? How, under such circumstances, can you hope to find that



spiritual sympathy in their communions which is one of the great wants of your renewed life? Plainly you cannot. Are you, then, at liberty to put your salvation in peril by rushing from the warm atmosphere of love and sympathy which now surrounds you, into one of cold and unsympathizing scrutiny and suspicion?

A poet has given beautiful expression to the desire which carries an inexperienced youth to sea, and which is succeeded by a desire to return home a thousand fold more intense, in the following lines :

“ See how from port the vessel glides,  
 With streamered masts o'er halcyon tides:  
 Its laggard course the sea-boy chides,  
     All loth that calms should bind him;  
 But distance only chains him more  
 With love-links to his native shore,  
 And sleep's best dream is to restore  
     The home he left behind him.”

In my walks as a pastor, I have met with many persons whose experience in the matter of their church relation resembled that of the poet's "sea-boy." When they

were young converts, the attentions of influential men, the appeal to their vanity which was conveyed in the attempt to proselyte them, the idea of finding a culture or a social status superior to Methodism, filled them with desire, like that of the sea-boy, to leave the sunny port of Methodism, where they were converted, and to enter another church. But once away from their true spiritual home, like the sea-boy, they missed its genial spirit, its warm, hearty sympathies, and yet felt bound to it by "love-links" they could not break. They regretted what they had done, yet did not feel free to retrace their steps. They were unsatisfied and ill at ease in the relation they had chosen, and longed for a fair opportunity to return to their true spiritual home. And such, beloved reader, may be your experience if you suffer yourself to be beguiled from your true spiritual home by any motive lower than a conviction of duty.

I have said that Providence, by giving you your spiritual parentage in the house of Methodism, *indicated* its will concerning

your true church home. I say *indicated* because there may be circumstances which would render it improper for a convert to unite with the church which led him to Christ. Should that church, for example, hold doctrines which he does not believe, it could not be his duty to join it. To profess faith in dogmas which the understanding rejects, is a violation of the law of truth. Whoever does so, corrupts his moral nature and offends God. Hence, in determining your church relation, you are solemnly bound to consider the question of creeds. Should you deliberately profess a creed which you do not heartily believe, you would certainly peril, if not assuredly forfeit, your peace of mind. You must be honest before God.

Now, I take it for granted that in *doctrine* you are a Methodist. You believe in the great truth of universal atonement. You believe that Jesus "tasted death for every man;" that grace, quickening and saving, is tendered to every man, rendering every man morally able to accept the Saviour;

that freedom from the guilt and dominion of sin, is attainable in this life, and that a truly converted man may so fall away as to finally perish. Believing these truths, I do not see how you can join any but a Methodist church without incurring the guilt of a *perpetual lie!*

You must, above all things, maintain your integrity. Depend upon it there is safety in the *path of duty* only.



## CHAPTER III.

### MEANS OF GRACE PECULIAR TO METHODISM.

WHEN the ancient Crusader, inflamed with desire to rescue the Holy Land from the sceptre of the Saracen, consecrated himself to that romantic enterprise, he at once threw his whole soul into the work of preparation. Regarding his pilgrimage as the grand object of his life, he sacrificed every other interest and affection at its shrine. He forsook his dearest friends; sold his domains; alienated his rights of sovereignty; and lavished his gold that he might contribute to the success of the crusade. In making preparation for his military duties, he purchased armor of proof, weapons of truest temper, steeds of highest mettle; he selected for his leaders men of true courage and sagacity, and chose a route most likely to lead him speedily and safely to the scene of conflict. Thus he

surrendered everything to the claim of his soul's ideal of duty and glory.

May you not, beloved convert, learn a lesson from the Crusader's spirit? Does not his action exhibit, in bold relief, the principle which should guide you in determining your church relation? Like him you have consecrated yourself to a great life work—an infinitely greater work than his. His object was to stand a conqueror on the spot of his Lord's crucifixion; yours is to stand victorious before the throne of your Saviour's glory. If this ideal led him to make stern sacrifices, and to adopt a course of self-discipline adapted to the end he had chosen for himself, ought not yours to bind you to similar sacrifices and discipline? Ought you not to subject all your actions to the demands of your purpose to reach heaven? Ought not all your voluntary relations to society to be determined by the question of their fitness to contribute to your great life aim? Above all, should not your church relation be settled by the adap-

tation of the particular church you may select to promote your salvation ?

If to these interrogatories you respond affirmatively, you are bound to select a church home with that body of Christians whose spirit, usages, and institutions are best fitted to aid you in working out your salvation. The social status, the wealth, the culture of a church, are inferior and subordinate questions ; though too many converts, to their great spiritual loss, have allowed them to be controlling and decisive. I hope better things of *you*. I take you to be an earnest convert, to whom "all things" are "loss," if you may but "win Christ." You will, therefore, be governed by the question, Which church is best fitted by its peculiar institutions, doctrines, and spirit to help me to heaven ?

Now if you take this principle for your guide, I have no doubt of its leading you into the Methodist Church. Within her enclosures, in addition to all that is valuable in the preaching and ordinances common to all Christian denominations, you will find

some precious advantages, which you cannot find outside the pale of Methodism. I will name some of them.

You will find in Methodism such a degree of direct and habitual culture of the great *elements of the Christian life*, as is found in no other denomination.

The Christian life consists chiefly in the exercise of right affections toward God. I do not affirm that it includes nothing more than love, because an enlightened understanding, a submissive will, and an obedient life, are essential to it, and are, in fact, included in it. But I do not assert that love to God, as manifested in Christ, is the principal element of the Christian life. "Love," says WESLEY, "is the end, the sole end of every dispensation of God, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things;" and the apostle John observes, "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." So that he who loves has spiritual life. He who loves not is a stranger to that life, is dead to God, is not born of God, has not spiritual vitality.



But this love is the offspring of faith, depends on faith, grows or declines, as faith is stronger or weaker. The truth which faith grasps is the germ of love. The divine message which faith receives, the glorious facts to which it gives credence, constitute the food which stimulates love and secures its growth. Without faith, love could not have birth or growth in the human soul. Hence, faith and love are the two grand elements of the Christian life. He who believes most earnestly, and with the most simplicity, will love most. He who has the strongest faith and the warmest love will have the most spiritual vitality, will grow most rapidly to moral power and beauty.

Now, if you look carefully into the history of Methodism, you will find that it has, from the beginning, given singular attention to the cultivation of these two grand elements of the Christian life. 1. In its preaching, its literature, its hymns, in its devotional services, in the lives of its founders and representative minds, it has always urged the duty of an earnest, un-

doubting reception of the truth, with singular intensity. Its preaching has entrenched itself in the religious consciousness of its hearers, to which it has invariably appealed with an authority which has proved itself irresistible, and *commanded*, so to speak, the belief of men in the inspiration of the word of God. An unshrinking faith in the divine word, accompanied by a simple, unrestrained personal affection for God in Christ—"an individualized spiritual life"—has been the most striking characteristic of its teachings, from the day of Mr. Wesley's conversion until now. 2. While it has not neglected to instruct its disciples in those great theological truths which enlighten the understanding, and teach men to conceive right views of divine things, it has given especial attention to the culture of religious experience—of emotional piety. Other denominations have trusted chiefly to the effect of doctrinal and ethical disquisitions, without seeking to stimulate their hearers to the exercise of faith and love by direct exhortation and personal persuasion. Meth-

odism does both. It unfolds the truth. It also habitually enforces it with tears, entreaties, exhortations. It struggles to relieve men of their doubts and fears, and urges them to cast their helpless spirits fearlessly upon God in Christ, as on the bosom of a Father, who is not merely willing, but infinitely anxious to save. The result of this has hitherto been a stronger, more cheerful faith, a more marked experience, a deeper religious emotion, stronger affection for God, than have been common in other bodies of Christians.

The peculiar doctrines of Methodism have also a direct tendency to stimulate the Christian life, and thereby to promote its growth.

By using the phrase "peculiar doctrines of Methodism," I do not wish it to be understood that Methodism has introduced any novelties into her theology. No. The doctrines of Methodism are as old as the gospel. Jesus taught them. So did his apostles and their successors, through the purest period of the history of the church.

Many of the "Reformers," also, both in England and Germany, were able advocates of her characteristic doctrines. They are not novelties, therefore; though viewed in relation to the churches which follow the theological system of Calvin, and to their distinct, earnest enunciation, many of them are now peculiar to Methodism.

These peculiar tenets have a beautiful, Scriptural fitness to promote faith and love in the hearts of men. By teaching the death of Jesus to be the price of the gracious probation, granted to the human race for the express purpose of restoring to righteousness as many as would consent to be regenerated by the Divine Spirit, Methodism exhibits the character of God in a light so just, so impartial, so loving, so earnest to save, that men have little ground left to cavil or to doubt, and none to presume; while they are powerfully moved to love and seek God, who is seen to be at once both good and just. By its clear enunciation of the doctrines of justification by faith only, of the witness of the Spirit, of the

possibility of complete victory over sin, it awakens the hopes, satisfies the aspirations, and encourages the efforts of such as seek to be Christians indeed. By its theory of the possibility of falling from grace so as to finally perish, it erects a strong barrier against the return of a believer to his old sins. Thus its views of truth give it an immense advantage over those churches which teach the dogmas of Calvin. The result of this advantage is seen in her superior growth. Her peculiar doctrines being peculiarly scriptural, are peculiarly efficacious in bringing men to Christ and leading them to heaven.

The peculiar institutions of Methodism are also eminently fitted to develop the elements of the Christian life.

The Christian life, like life in all its forms, is active. Its tendency is to activity. It always seeks to expand its forces in its legitimate sphere. Repel this tendency, check this force, and it will roll back upon itself and die. To be healthfully developed it must be permitted to flow out in fit ex-

pression, in praise, in acknowledgment, in acts of obedience, in works of benevolence, in the performance of duty. This is its law, and it must be obeyed.

Methodism has always recognized this important principle. It is incorporated into its very organization, and its peculiar institutions are therefore admirably fitted to develop the spiritual life of its members. Look at its class meetings, and love feasts: how they educate the believer to form the habit of giving expression to the conceptions of faith, and the raptures of love! How they lure him to obey that first prompting of the religious life, to attempt the salvation of others, of which every true disciple is conscious! How suggestive, too, of social duties are those meetings, providing as they do an opportunity for the confession of faults, the utterances of desire, and the admonitions of wisdom! So, also, the Methodist prayer meeting is an arena for the development of the spiritual life. It is a battle-field, in which every member is taught to win souls, to fight for the extension of

Christ's kingdom. Lay preaching is also productive of much enlargement to the spiritual life of Methodism. By introducing thousands of valuable minds into spheres of activity, it develops their life, and leads to the increase of that life in others. Nor is the itinerancy of Methodism without its influence in this direction. By the frequent introduction of new pastors into its pulpits, it ensures the constant, varied, energetic enunciation of those great fundamental truths of our holy religion, which, applied by the Divine Spirit, become the germ and nutriment of the divine life to those who receive them.

We doubt if the constant preaching of these great, central, saving truths is possible to a settled ministry, which is compelled to distribute general truths, and occupy itself with single points, to avoid sameness and repetition. But the itinerancy of Methodism keeps them before its congregations, the same in substance, but in ever varied forms of expression and diverse modes of illustration, and thereby becomes a powerful means



of stimulating the growth of the spiritual life. Thus, all that is peculiar to the Methodist organization, is strikingly—may I not add philosophically?—adapted to develop the Christian life.

In its provision for the cultivation of the *highest forms of Christian fellowship*, Methodism stands peerless among the churches.

One great purpose of Christianity is to unite mankind in bonds of holy fellowship with God and with one another. How beautifully and tenderly this idea is brought to view in the sacerdotal prayer of Christ, where he asks for his disciples, "*That they all may be ONE; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be ONE IN US*  
\* \* \* *That they may be one, EVEN AS WE ARE ONE!!*"

The fellowship portrayed in this passage is no cold, formal, heartless unity, but communion and sympathy in the highest possible degree,—such communion as exists between the Father and the Son, "*That they may be one, EVEN AS WE ARE ONE.*" What ineffable, delightful fellowship is this! "It



implies," says FOOTE, in his *School of Christ*, "sympathy, oneness of mind, mutual understanding and agreement, familiar and friendly intercourse, the responsive beat of heart to heart, soul answering to soul, as face answers to face in water"—"a fellowship of love to an unseen Saviour, a fellowship of joys, hopes, and fears, that lie quite beyond the circle of a natural man's experience."

This prayer of Christ finds constant and universal utterance in the spiritual aspirations of his true disciples. One of the first desires of the converted mind is for such fellowship. "O!" it exclaims, "that I had some one in whom I might discern the reflection of my own soul, and from whom I might receive back again the expression of my own confiding affection!" It was this aspiration, unchecked by cold suspicion, which led the primitive converts to Christianity to seek that affectionate communion which is so glowingly described by the annalist of the apostles. "Knit together in love," they met in bands, "continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking

of bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." They spoke to each other in "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs," rejoiced with those that did rejoice, and wept with those that wept. They "exhorted one another daily," bore "one another's burdens," confessed their "faults one to another," and prayed "one for another." Thus they enjoyed the communion of saints" in a very high degree; and, by their practice, illustrated the method of the spiritual life, wherever it is permitted to unfold itself unhindered by unscriptural prejudices and unevangelical customs.

If you consult the biography of deeply pious men, of any sect, you will find them, when in their healthiest state of mind, seeking this sort of intercourse with their fellow Christians. MR. WESLEY, shortly after his conversion, was so anxious for the fellowship of experienced Christians, that he actually made a journey from England to Germany, that he might enjoy it with the followers of COUNT ZINZENDORF, at Hernhutt. His

motives are stated in his journal in these words :—

“My weak mind could not thus bear to be sawn asunder. And I hoped the conversing with those holy men who were themselves living witnesses to the full power of faith, and yet able to bear with those that are weak, would be a means, under God, of so establishing my soul, that I might go on from faith to faith, and from strength to strength.”

The same desire led DR. CHALMERS to form a very close spiritual intimacy with his friend, MR. J. ANDERSON. With this gentleman Dr. C. enjoyed a very intimate religious fellowship. Their intercourse aimed at the very thing which the Methodist class meeting is designed to accomplish,—the communication of religious experience. Dr. C. was led to practice it at first, by the impulses of his spiritual life. In the following passage he defends it with the skill of a philosopher.

“I am very much interested in the progress of your sentiments. This, in the

language of good but despised Christians, is called the communication of *your religious experience*. There is fanaticism annexed to the term ; but this is a mere bugbear ; and I count it strange that that very evidence which is held in such exclusive respect in every other department of inquiry, should be so despised and laughed at when applied to the progress of a human being in that greatest of all transitions, from a state of estrangement to a state of intimacy with God ; from the terror of His condemnation to an affecting sense of His favor, and friendship, and reconciled presence ; from the influence of earthly and debasing affections, to the influence of those new and heavenly principles which the Spirit of God establishes in the heart of every believer. This is what our Saviour calls 'passed from death unto life.' My prayer for both of us is, that 'it may be made sure,' and that 'hereby we may know that He dwelleth in us and we in Him, that he hath given us of His Spirit.'—*Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers*, vol. i., p. 255.

It was to meet this want of the spiritual life, that MR. WESLEY introduced the CLASS MEETING into the organism of Methodism. He knew that the spiritual life of believers could not be healthfully developed unless they enjoyed constant fellowship with each other, and he knew also, that the cultivation of such fellowship is a scriptural duty. To provide opportunity for its culture, and to prevent its neglect by his followers, he established this meeting. He did not pretend to claim *divine authority* for it; for, in the "minutes," he classed it with "*prudential*," and not with "*instituted*" means of grace. But it stands so intimately related to, and is so necessary to the proper growth of the spiritual life, that regular attendance upon it has always been one of the regulations which the Methodist Church has required her members to observe.

There can be no doubt; that the piety of Methodism owes much of its characteristic fervor and animation to the influences of its class meetings. The peculiar feature of the class is the provision it makes for the free

*communication of religious experience.* Its members, in a spirit of frank, affectionate simplicity, unfold the workings of the divine life as developed in their several experiences. They are thus led to discover the identity of the work wrought in their hearts by the self same Spirit. If one is depressed, tempted, or crushed, he learns that his temptations are not peculiar to himself. Others have felt, resisted, conquered them ; why may not he ? If one is elevated, he finds his joy reciprocated ; while his happy experience encourages his companions to seek like enlargement of heart. If one has erred, the persuasive sympathy of his brethren melts him to penitence ; their prayers aid him to return to the waiting Shepherd of his soul. Thus, the ignorance of one is instructed by the knowledge of another. The strong impart their vigor to the weak. The unwary learn caution from the wisdom of experience. The halting are rebuked. Those who run well are confirmed and encouraged to persevere.

Besides the class meeting, Methodism has

its "Love Feasts," which are also intended and calculated to cultivate spiritual fellowship. The love-feast, though now peculiar to Methodism, is as ancient as the Christian Church. "It is certain," says COLEMAN, in his *Ancient Christianity*, "that the feast of charity was celebrated in the earliest period of the Christian Church. See Acts ii. 46." It was celebrated at first in connection with the Lord's supper, and consisted of a social meal, accompanied with religious exercises and expressions of brotherly affection. As the Primitive church lost its purity, the love-feast lost its original significancy; abuses became associated with it, and it was finally abolished by the Council of Laodicea in the middle of the fourth century. Mr. Wesley, in imitation of the Moravians, adopted it with its present simple form, and strictly religious character, for the spiritual benefit of his societies. It remains, a cherished and delightful institution of Methodism and is eminently fitted to promote Christian fellowship.

Thus, you see some of the spiritual advan-



tages of Methodism. It cherishes with *direct* and habitual effort, the great elements of the Christian life ; its doctrines are pre-eminently suited to feed the flame of that life ; its peculiar institutions have the same tendency ; it provides, as no other church does, for the cultivation of Christian fellowship. In one word, the whole system is organized for the special purpose of developing deep, earnest, active, glowing piety. It offers no inducements to the spiritual sluggard, the formalist, the half-way Christian. It seeks the sincere lover of Christ, and offers itself to him as a helper to the attainment of the highest forms of the divine life. Are not these great advantages ? Ought you to sacrifice them lightly ? Are they not just what *you* desire in your holiest moments ? Why then do you hesitate ? Away with the suggestions of those who seek to proselyte you to other altars. Go, give yourself to your true spiritual mother, saying, in the simple language of the dutiful RUTH : " Thy people shall be my people ; and thy God my God ! "



## CHAPTER IV.

### OBJECTIONS TO METHODIST PECULIARITIES CONSIDERED.

IN one of the European picture galleries, there is a fine portrait of JEAN PAUL RITCHER, surrounded by floating clouds, which, when examined closely, resolve themselves into beautiful angel faces. But so soft and shadowy are those angelic images, that to be discerned they must be beheld from a close standpoint, and studied with an attentive eye.

This picture embodies a truth in Methodism; for its peculiarities, if viewed at a distance and by a prejudiced mind, appear like impenetrable clouds. Their beauty and value are not fully apparent until one draws nigh to them, and examines them with an appreciative mind. Then they disclose themselves. Then they stand forth full of spi-

ritual attraction and power. But inasmuch as many persons, who only view them from a distance and with envious feelings, have set themselves up as their critics and judges, you will not be surprised to learn that numerous objections have been brought against those very peculiarities which are at once the true ornaments of Methodism and the chief sources, under God, of its wonderful usefulness. You may meet with some of these self-constituted critics. Let me guard you against their misrepresentations. I will begin with their objections to the *class meeting*.

It is sometimes said the class meeting is a mere confessional. This is not true. The class meeting is not a confessional, but a place for the *communication of religious experience*. It is the duty of the class leader to draw out such communication by inquiring of his members "how their souls prosper"—a question which covers the entire range of religious experience. It *may* lead to confession, or it may not. That depends very much on the spiritual health of the persons

present. It generally leads to acknowledgments of the divine goodness, and descriptions of the various phases of the inner life which have characterized their recent experiences. Hence, the assumption that *confession* is the sole, or even the chief business of the class meeting, is false. And it is especially false to allege, as some have done, that when there is confession, it is unaccompanied by *contrition*; for the class meeting is the very last place to which an *impenitent* person would be likely to resort.

It has been asserted by a certain writer, that the class meeting is a "mitigated form of the Romish confessional." Your own intelligence will teach you that this is a lame and vulgar appeal to prejudice, because there is not the least analogy between the class meeting and the confessional. You know that the Romish confessional is a *private* box, where the worshipper makes secret confession of *all* his sins to a *priest*, with a view to his *absolution*. It is a means by which the Romanist penitent performs the *sacrament* of penance. But a class meeting is a

*meeting* of Christian people who *openly* converse with one of their number on the subject of religious experience, for the purpose of being assisted to "work out their own salvation." It needs no priest to carry it on. Its *leader* is a *layman*. It pretends to nothing *sacramental* in its character. It exacts no confessions of sin. It knows nothing of *priestly absolution*. Its type is not the Romish confessional, for it has no one feature which bears the smallest resemblance to that unscriptural institution. It is simply a meeting for the enjoyment and promotion of Christian fellowship, such as God's ancient people cherished, when, according to Malachi, "They that feared the Lord, spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that fear the Lord, and that thought upon his name:" and such as is required by the apostle James, where he says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

Again, the same inconsiderate author

affirms that the class meeting tends to "promote insincerity and a habit of hollow pretences," because the weekly relation of experience it requires is "a temptation to tread a beaten track of recital, in which actual experience does not run; or to rely somewhat upon invention for the materials of a story that will make a good appearance before the class."

This argument is both uncharitable and fallacious. Uncharitable, because it brings a charge of hypocrisy and falsehood against Methodists generally: fallacious, because it proceeds on the supposition that a sound religious experience cannot furnish material for such weekly inquiries and relations as a class meeting implies, and therefore it must lead to false pretensions. But suppose the spiritual life is so active, so varied in its development, so surrounded by hindrances, and so subject to conflicts as to present innumerable phases and shades of experience, it must then be conceded that the class meeting is precisely fitted to meet its wants, because it furnishes stated opportunities to

express its joys and griefs, and to obtain encouragement, instruction, and stimulus. Now this is the Methodistic view of the Christian life. And on this view, which I believe is the true one, class meetings stand firmly and securely built. Those who think the Christian life is dull and stagnant—a still half-putrid pool of subsided feeling—will readily believe that a Christian cannot have enough of “internal history” to furnish material for weekly communion, and that the class meeting cannot be sustained except by falsehood and hypocrisy. But you, beloved reader, do not hold such low views of the Christian life. You know, too, that the class meeting has stood the test of more than a century, and that millions of pious souls have been wonderfully blessed by it. You will not, therefore, be likely to be drawn away from Methodism by such objections.

It may interest you to know that while some sectarian writers are assailing the class meeting, others, of more intelligence, candor, and piety, are recommending its introduction into their own ecclesiastical

organisms. A recent article in the *Episcopal Recorder* recommends the institution of class or band meetings by the Protestant Episcopal Church. It says that from the "class meetings the great Methodist revival drew its strength, and had they been legitimated in the Church of England, she would have remained in fact, as well as in name, NATIONAL." It mentions two or three instances in which meetings conducted like our class meetings were signally blessed—and concludes with the remark:—"And it is not too much to say, that by the adoption of such meetings in future, the church [Protestant Episcopal] would be taking the means, of all others the most efficient, for throwing off the spiritual sluggishness with which she is now oppressed."

Not long since, the pastor of a Congregationalist church in Massachusetts, in conversation with a Methodist preacher stationed in the same town, lamented that the converts of a recent revival in his church, did not manifest that vigor in their spiritual life which was desirable. He complained parti-



cularly of their backwardness in religious meetings. He then asked his Methodist brother: "How do you manage to secure so much activity as is manifest in your converts?"

"Sir," replied the Methodist preacher, "that results not so much from what I do, as from the influences of our system, especially of our class meeting."

"What is the nature of your class meeting?" inquired the other.

The preacher explained the manner and design of that meeting to him. After hearing his statement, the Congregationalist pastor looked up very earnestly, and with great emphasis remarked:

"Such a meeting must have a most beneficial influence both on old Christians and young converts. It is just what WE need!"

That pastor spoke honestly. He would doubtless have been glad, if the order and public sentiment of his denomination had permitted, to establish class meetings in his own church.

[A similar remark was made by the late



lamented Dr. Burns, of the Canada Presbyterian church, a few years before his death.—ED.]

A kindred conviction of the value of this means of grace is also working its way into the minds of candid observers in England, as will appear by the following facts.

A committee of the English Convocation having recommended to the Episcopal Church the formation of religious fraternities within its bosom, for the benefit of converts, and a High Church writer, in advocating the measure, having ignored the existence of the Wesleyan class meeting, a scholarly critic in the *North British Review* calls attention to this feature of Wesleyanism. After quoting the disciplinary description of class and band meetings, this critic says: "Now we think that there are great doubts whether the effect upon the mind of this practice of confession, which prevails in this closest association, (*the band*) would, in most cases, be salutary or no; but it seems evident that it is the sort of confession recommended in St. James' Epistle, being, like it, mutual—directed, not

to a priest, but to a righteous man, real or supposed—and with a view to obtaining the benefit of his prayers; and it supplies a want of the soul, which, although perhaps morbid, is a real and frequent one.”

This writer then goes on to state what he “regards as the fault of the Wesleyan system,” namely, “that the connection with a class is made an indispensable term of communion.” “The whole thing,” he adds, “should be optional; and then the system would be free from all objections, and might continue, *as it is at present, a great means of strengthening and holding the convert, and a great support and comfort to a large class of minds.*”

You will observe that the approval here given to class meetings is reluctant and qualified. The writer evidently shares in those prejudices which even candid and noble minds may innocently possess, against institutions with which, from the nature of the case, they cannot be practically acquainted. But this only renders the measure of approval which is given more valuable, for it

shows that the writer applauds no more than his gravest and most mature judgment compels him to do. His praise is a concession made to his prejudices, in obedience to the demands of his reason.

In the above quotations you will observe that this writer admits: 1. The scriptural character of the class meeting. 2. Its adaptation to supply a "real want" of the soul. 3. That it is a "great means of strengthening and holding the convert," a "great support and comfort to a large class of minds."

These admissions are important, coming as they do from a highly educated Presbyterian, through the columns of a British Review. They show that the best mind in the Christian church is beginning to recognize a fitness and an effectiveness in the ecclesiastical organism established by Mr. Wesley, which more shallow and bigoted minds have hitherto refused to see. They also indicate a tendency in other Christian bodies towards Methodist usages. They point to a period in which tardy justice will be done to Mr.

Wesley's sagacity by the general adoption, with various modifications, of the leading features of his system, by the evangelical churches of Christendom.

Such testimonies as these confirm what I have said in illustration of the value of the class meeting. They also show you that others, besides Methodists, concede its scriptural character, its necessity, and its fitness to supply a positive demand of the spiritual life. Be assured, then, that in entering the pale of Methodism, you will find in its institution such a help to the "communion of saints," and to growth in grace, as you can find in no other branch of the Christian Church. No other church provides in its organism for the culture of Christian fellowship.

It is related of a certain Spaniard that he was accustomed to put on spectacles when he ate cherries, that they might appear large and tempting to his eye. I have no doubt you will find persons among those seeking to proselyte you, who are wont to put on spectacles when they examine the peculiari-

ties of our church. Such spectacled critics will point you to numerous imaginary evils. Perhaps they will try to convince you that Methodist prayer-meetings are marked by practices which are contrary to the true order of the church of God. They may tell you, for instance, as a late writer has done, that our practice of relating experiences tends "to promote insincerity and a habit of hollow pretences." In support of this charge they may refer to this redoubtable gentleman, who gravely relates that he once heard "fifteen professed converts giving their experience," who "repeated always the ideas and most often the words of the first." This convinced the critic, that their "experience was nothing more than the recital of a lesson from memory." Your spectacled informants may then add, that these converts were schooled into this hypocrisy by our system, and that consequently you had better forsake it as quickly as possible.

But *you* already know enough of Methodism to perceive the utter falsity of this

charge, which, by the way, carries its own refutation on its face. Just look at it.

1. It is not customary in public Methodist prayer-meetings for converts to relate their experience at length. They merely make a general confession of their newly-found faith in Christ. 2. The fifteen converts evidently did not do it, for the time usually occupied in a public meeting, would be insufficient for fifteen persons to give their experience, "*in all its forms and minuteness.*"

Now, if they were not relating the details of their experience, but only making a general confession of their faith, what becomes of this argument? It surely will not be affirmed to be a thing "incredible," that fifteen persons should have had a genuine religious experience so *substantially* identical as to find true expression in ideas and verbiage very nearly similar? Is not the experience of every Christian in *substance* the same? Does not the *difference* in Christian experience, lie chiefly in mode, circumstance, and detail, rather than in substance? If not, why do the writings of David and Paul

furnish the best possible language by which to express the experience of modern believers? Why then is the sameness of verbiage and ideas employed by fifteen converts to express a general confession of an experience which, in order to be genuine, must be substantially identical, tortured into an argument against their sincerity? Is there not a corresponding sameness in the general profession, which converts in other churches make in their inquiry and conference meetings? Do they not all speak of "indulging a hope," of trusting in "God's covenanted mercies," and of *hoping* in the "sovereign grace of God," and kindred "stereotyped" phrases? What then becomes of this argument? It falls to the ground, a glaring sophism, which *you* will shake off as easily as Paul shook the viper from his hand on the island of Melita.

The Methodist *prayer meeting* is objected to by some, because of its "noise," its altar for penitents, its seeming confusion, and, in seasons of revival, and at camp-meetings, its scenes of earnest excitement. These things have been wickedly ridiculed by some, who



in the true spirit of infidelity, call them a "religious comedy," "comic operations," &c., which are encouraged by our ministry, not because of their intrinsic rightfulness, but because they "promote Methodism."

I very much mistake the temper of your piety, dear convert, if this objection has the weight of a feather in your estimation. *You* are an *earnest* Christian. *You* believe in an *earnest* Christianity. *You* could not endure to see men laboring to save immortal souls from unending death, with the cool gravity of a Turk sipping coffee. *You* believe that coldness and formality are never more out of place than at a prayer-meeting. *You* will, therefore, treat this objection with the contempt it justly merits. Provided the earnestness of Methodism does not degenerate into extravagance and fanaticism, it will be to you its highest commendation, that at its altars the penitent is not forbidden to exhibit the intense emotions of his awakened soul; no, not if they lead him to come "trembling," and "falling down," like the Philippian jailor, and crying, "Sirs, what



must I do to be saved?" Nor, will you be kept from Methodism because its ministers and members are quick to sympathize with such intensity of feeling, ready to pour out their souls in strong desire for seekers, and to lift up their voices in fervent praise when God pronounces them forgiven.

Now what is there beyond this in the usual manifestations of Methodist prayer-meetings? Occasionally, and in some places, it is true, the tides of feeling may overflow the banks of rigid propriety. But are such exceptional breaches of the ordinary proprieties of life so unbecoming as to merit the title of "comic operations?" I have read that a Czar of Russia once saw a peasant struggling for life in the waters of a river. The sight appealed to his humanity. The Czar was forgotten in the man. He tore off his coat, leaped into the river, brought the half dead peasant to the shore, and stood dripping and disordered among his astonished attendants. Doubtless his aspect was very "comic," very unsatisfactory in the eyes of brainless etiquette. But who, with a *man's*

heart in his bosom, could ridicule him? So, too, there may be in a Methodist prayer-meeting, such struggling for the "life" of sinking souls as gives rise to "strong cries and tears," to demonstrations which are uncourtly, and contrary to the laws of a finical etiquette; but who with the soul of a Christian, can find it in his heart to ridicule such things? I would not, to be sure, *encourage* them. They are not sought for or cherished in the Methodist church, generally. But I cannot understand how any man, whose heart has learned to agonize for the "birth of souls," can *mock* at them when they do occur. I shrink from such a man, as I would from a French dancing master, who should stand beside the stake of a dying martyr and criticize him because his postures were not altogether *secundum artem*. I have little doubt that, if such as he had witnessed the excitement which followed the discourse of Peter on the day of Pentecost, they would have pronounced it a "religious comedy." But I need not dwell on this point. *You*, beloved reader, are too earnest a Christian

to be moved from Methodism by assaults upon its activity, intensity, and ardent sympathy for human salvation.

Another usage of Methodism, which is often bitterly assailed by its enemies, is the Christian liberty it allows to *women*. Believing, with an apostle, that in "Christ Jesus" there is neither "male nor female," it does not reduce woman to a cypher, or restrict her power to do good, by depriving her of the privilege of offering prayer, or of declaring the goodness of God to her soul, in class and prayer meetings. Woman's equality in the rights, privileges, and blessings of the gospel is practically declared in Methodism, by her admission to these privileges. If the reader is a woman, this fact must commend Methodism to her esteem. She may not wish to use these opportunities herself, for she may possess so sensitive a nature as to shrink from public observation. Still, she can but feel the honor done to her sex by a usage which so distinctly recognizes its equality. She can but acknowledge that

Methodism has an especial claim on woman's gratitude for this most excellent custom.

But is this usage scriptural? Many persons affirm that it is not. They heap unstinted censures on the Methodist church for allowing it; claiming that it is forbidden by the apostle, in these words: "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak."—1 Cor. 14: 34.

If this were the only text in which women's privileges were referred to by the apostle, it might settle the question. But fortunately the mind of the Spirit is elsewhere expressed, and that too, in favor of the usage of Methodism, and the dignity of women. In 1 Cor. 11: 5, the apostle recognizes the right of women to speak and pray in the church, by prescribing the manner in which those duties are to be performed. "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoreth her head." Again, in verse 13; "Is it comely that a woman pray unto God with her head uncovered?" That you may see the force of these texts, I will

quote Dr. Adam Clarke's comment upon verse 5th :

“ Whatever may be the meaning of praying and prophesying in respect to the man, they have precisely the same meaning in respect to the woman. So that some women, at least, as well as some men, might speak to others to edification and exhortation, and comfort. And this kind of prophesying or teaching, was predicted by Joel 2 : 28, and referred to by Peter, Acts 2 : 17. And had there not been such gifts bestowed on women, the prophecy could not have had its fulfilment. The only difference marked by the apostle was, the man had his head uncovered, because he was the representative of Christ, the woman had hers covered, because she was placed, by the order of God, in a state of subjection to the man ; and because it was a custom, both among the Greeks and Romans, and among the Jews an express law, that no woman should be seen abroad without a veil.”

This interpretation accords with the practice of the primitive church, as shown in

various portions of the New Testament. Did not a woman make the first proclamation of the resurrection of Christ to the apostolic college? Did not PRISCILLA instruct APOLLOS in the meaning of the Scriptures? Did not Paul greet her as his "helper in Christ Jesus?" Did he not "thank her" for her services, and declare, that "all the churches of the Gentiles thanked" her also? (See Romans 16: 4.) Did he not also send salutations to TRYPHENA, TRYPHOSA, and the "beloved PERSIS?" Of the first two ladies he says, they "labor in the Lord:" of Persis, that she "labored much in the Lord." What this labor was, I will permit Dr. Clarke to state. In his note on Romans 16: 12, he says of Tryphena and Tryphosa:—

"Two holy women, who, it seems, were assistants to the apostle in his work; probably by exhorting, visiting the sick, &c. Persis was another woman, who, it seems, excelled the preceding; for, of her it is said, she labored much in the Lord. We learn from this, that Christian *women*, as well as

men, labored in the ministry of the word. In those times of simplicity, all persons, whether men or women, who had received the knowledge of the truth, believed it to be their duty to propagate it to the uttermost of their power. Many have spent much useless labor in endeavoring to prove that these women did not preach. That there were some *prophetesses*, as well as prophets in the Christian church, we learn; and that a *woman* might *pray* or *prophecy*, provided she had her *head covered* we know; and that whoever prophesied spoke unto others to edification, exhortation, and comfort, St. Paul declares, 1 Cor. 14 : 3. And that no preacher can do more, every person must acknowledge; because to edify, exhort, and comfort, are the prime ends of the gospel ministry. If *women* thus prophesied, then women preached. There is, however, much more than this implied in the Christian ministry, of which men only, and men called of God, are capable."

But how can these facts and interpretations be harmonized with the command to "keep



silence," quoted above? There is but one way to do this. The prohibition must be understood to apply to speaking under particular circumstances, not to speaking and praying in general. This is Dr. Clarke's view. He says of the words, "Let your women keep silence in the churches :"  
\* \* \* "It is evident from the context, that the apostle refers here to *asking questions*, and what we call *dictating* in the assemblies. It was permitted to any man to ask questions, to object, to altercate, attempt to refute, &c., in the synagogue; but this liberty was not allowed to any woman. St. Paul confirms this, in reference also to the Christian church. He orders them to keep silence, and if they wish to learn any thing, let them inquire of their husbands at home, because it was perfectly indecorous for women to be contending with men in public assemblies on points of doctrine, cases of conscience, &c. But this by no means intimated that, when a woman received any particular influence from God, to enable her to teach, she was not to obey that influence; on the contrary, she was to obey it, and the apostle lays down directions



in chap. 11, for regulating her *personal appearance* when thus employed," &c.

Accept this explanation and all is clear. There is then no contradiction between the precepts themselves, nor between the precepts and the practice of the apostle. Deny it, and the precepts oppose each other: the apostle is guilty of the inconsistency of tolerating and praising a practice in one place, which he condemns in another. I know *you* will not accept this latter conclusion. You have then but one alternative. You must believe that the Methodist usage of permitting women to speak and pray is sanctioned by the practice of the Apostolic church, and by the word of God.

Such are the chief objections urged against our leading peculiarities. You see how readily they dissolve when touched by the Ithuriel spear of examination. It is so with all the objections which are coined so plentifully in the midst of our enemies. The fact is, they do not understand Methodism, and you have but to compare their assertions with the real facts, to see them melt into air.

## CHAPTER V.

### DOCTRINES PECULIAR TO METHODISM.

“OPINION is mistress of the world,” says the Italian proverb. And is it not so? Is there not a close relationship between the actions and opinions of men? Does not doctrine mould character and give color to action? Find a nation with a false theology, and do you not also find it corrupt in affection and wicked in practice? Did not the cruel, unchaste, bloodthirsty deities of Greece and Rome beget cruelty, lust, and strife in their worshippers? Has any race of men ever attained to rectitude of character through faith in debasing falsehoods? Has any sect ever attained to a Christian standard of experience and morals while denying truths fundamental to Christianity? Never! How, then, can you reasonably hope to grow up

to the maturity of a sound and healthy Christian character without attaining correct views of the doctrines of Holy Writ? You cannot. The thistle will not bring forth figs. Beauty will not spring from deformity. Neither will error produce heavenly affections, nor unscriptural doctrines eliminate a holy life.

If, therefore, beloved convert, you would attain to a comfortable experience, a right state of heart, and a pure life, you must cherish sound doctrines—you must study to conform your creed to the teachings of the Divine Word. You must place yourself in communion with that church whose pulpit enunciates the purest forms of truth; whose creed is nearest to the Bible.

If you are guided by these principles, I think you will not hesitate to enter the pale of Methodism; for in its creed you will find doctrines which commend themselves to your enlightened reason, which harmonize with the Word of God, and which are eminently adapted to support and develop a vigorous religious experience.

I cannot in this little volume enter into a thorough exposition and defence of the doctrines of Methodism. All I can do, is to throw out such hints and suggestions as may strengthen your confidence in those doctrines which I presume you to have already embraced; and to fortify your mind against such objections as your proselyting friends may whisper in your ears.

I wish you to note first, that the *fundamental* doctrines of Methodism are in strict harmony with the faith of the evangelical church of all ages and in all countries. Methodists hold, in common with Calvinists, the doctrines of human depravity, the deity of Christ, the atonement, justification by faith only, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the future punishment of unbelievers, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and their sufficiency for salvation. Hence, you perceive, that the *evangelical* character of Methodism cannot be truthfully denied, because it teaches those great cardinal truths which have ever distinguished evangelical from non-evangelical bodies.

The leading doctrines maintained by the Methodists you will find stated, in general terms, in the twenty-five articles of religion contained in the "Discipline." These articles, with the exception of the *twenty-third*, were abridged from the "Thirty-nine Articles" of the Church of England,\* by MR. WESLEY. They were first printed in what was called the "Sunday Service;" but, in 1790, they were incorporated into the body of the Discipline. That you may know how they are interpreted by our church I will quote the REV. RICHARD WATSON'S statement of those points in them for the defence of which Methodism has always been distinguished:

"Methodists maintain the total fall of man in Adam, and his utter inability to recover himself, or to take one step towards his recovery, 'without the grace of God pre-

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\*These articles were originally *forty-two* in number. They were first framed by Archbishop Cranmer and Bishop Ridley, in 1551. After being approved by the Convocation, they were published in English and Latin, in 1553. In 1562, they were revised and reduced to thirty-nine, and approved by the Convocation.

venting him, that he may have a good will, and working with him when he has that good will.' They assert that 'Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man.' This grace they call free, as extending itself freely to all. They say that 'Christ is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe;' and that, consequently, they are authorized to offer salvation to all, and to 'preach the gospel to every creature.' They hold justification by faith. 'Justification,' says Mr. Wesley, 'sometimes means our acquittal at the last day, Matt. 12:37; but this is altogether out of the present question; for that justification, whereof our Articles and Homilies speak, signifies present forgiveness, pardon of sins, and consequently acceptance with God, who therein declares his righteousness, or justice, and mercy, by or for the remission of sins that are past, Rom. 3:25, saying, I will be merciful to thy unrighteousness, and thy iniquities I will remember no more. I believe the condition of this is faith, Rom. 4:5, &c.; I mean, not only that without faith we cannot be justified, but also that as

soon as any one has true faith, in that moment he is justified. Faith in general, is a divine supernatural evidence, or conviction, of things not seen, not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence, or conviction, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, but a full reliance on the merits of his death, a sure confidence that Christ died for my sins; that he loved me, and gave himself for me; and the moment a penitent sinner believes this, God pardons and absolves him.'

"This faith, Mr Wesley affirms, 'is the gift of God. No man is able to work it in himself. It is a work of Omnipotence. It requires no less power thus to quicken a dead soul, than to raise a body that lies in the grave. It is a new creation; and none can create a soul anew but He, who first created the heavens and the earth. It is the free gift of God, which he bestows not on those who are worthy of his favor, not on such as are previously holy, and so fit to be crowned with all the blessings of his good-



ness; but on the ungodly and unholy, on those who, till that hour, were fit only for everlasting destruction; those in whom is no good thing, and whose only plea was, God be merciful to me a sinner! No merit, no goodness in man, precedes the forgiving love of God. His pardoning mercy supposes nothing in us but a sense of mere sin and misery; and to all who see and feel and own their wants, and utter inability to remove them, God freely gives faith, for the sake of Him in whom he is always well pleased. Good works follow this faith, Luke 6:43, but cannot go before it; much less can sanctification, which implies a continued course of good works springing from holiness of heart.

“As to repentance, he insisted that it is conviction of sin, and that repentance and works meet for repentance, go before justifying faith; but he held, with the Church of England, that all works, before justification, had, ‘the nature of sin;’ and that, as they had no root in the love of God, which can only arise from a persuasion of his being



reconciled to us, they could not constitute a moral worthiness preparatory to pardon. That true repentance springs from the grace of God, is most certain ; but, whatever fruits it may bring forth, it changes not man's relation to God. He is a sinner, and is justified as such ; ' for it is not a saint, but a sinner, that is forgiven, and under the notion of a sinner.' God justifieth the ungodly, not the godly. Repentance, according to his statement, is necessary to true faith ; but faith alone is the direct and immediate instrument of pardon. They hold also the direct internal testimony of the Holy Spirit to the believer's adoption.

“ They maintain, also, that by virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ, and the operations of the Holy Spirit, it is their privilege to arrive at that maturity in grace, and participation of divine nature, which excludes sin from the heart, and fills it with perfect love to God and man. This they denominate Christian perfection. On this doctrine Mr. Wesley observes, ‘ Christian perfection does not imply an exemption from ignorance or

mistake, infirmities or temptations; but it implies the being so crucified with Christ, as to be able to testify, I live not, but Christ liveth in me, Gal. 2 : 23, and hath purified their hearts by faith, Acts. 15 : 9.' Again : 'To explain myself a little farther on this head : 1. Not only sin, properly so called, that is, a voluntary transgression of a known law; but sin, improperly so called, that is, an involuntary transgression of a divine law, known or unknown, needs the atoning blood. 2. I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions, which, I apprehend, to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality. 3. Therefore, sinless perfection is a phrase I never use, lest I should contradict myself. 4. I believe a person filled with the love of God is still liable to these involuntary transgressions. 5. Such transgressions you may call sins, if you please; I do not, for the reasons above mentioned.'"

With respect to the doctrine of "Final Perseverance," the Methodists hold "that

God gives to the truly faithful, who are regenerated by his grace, the means of preserving themselves in this state; yet the regenerate may lose true justifying faith, forfeit their state of grace, and die in their sins." See Ezek. 18 : 24, and 33 : 18. John 15 : 6. Heb. 6 : 4-6.

These doctrines, though taught with peculiar emphasis and distinctness by Mr. Wesley and his followers, did not originate with him. As I have already observed, they are as ancient as Christianity. The opposite tenets, now known as Calvinism, were unknown to the primitive church. All the Fathers, down to the time of AUGUSTINE, an African bishop, who flourished in the latter part of the fourth century, taught the truths which now distinguish the Methodists from their Calvinistic neighbors. For Calvin himself admits, that none of the Fathers, either Greek or Latin, before Augustine, give countenance to his peculiar theology. And even Augustine, in his later works, teaches opinions which are more in harmony with the theory of universal redemption and its

consequents, than with the scheme of predestination and limited atonement, which he had invented at an earlier period of his career.

Now if Calvinism is taught in the Bible, how came it to pass that the contemporaries and immediate successors of the apostles, knew nothing about it? Why is it that its first appearance in the written theology of the primitive church, is in the writings of Augustine the African? Does it appear probable that such important doctrines as unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the necessary final perseverance of the elect, would have been forgotten or overlooked, and that their contraries would be universally received, for over three hundred years after Christ, if his apostles had taught them to the church? Your common sense will answer in the negative. Your reason will teach you that this silence of all the Fathers before Augustine, is strong presumptive proof that the church knew nothing of those unscriptural theories, until the philosophic bishop of Hippo evol-

ved them in his controversies with PELAGIUS the heretic. While the opposite fact, that they all taught an unlimited atonement, conditional election, &c., affords equally strong presumption, that these latter doctrines were received by them from the apostles. These things being so, it is clear that Methodist doctrines are as ancient as Christianity—that, in fact, they include all that is contained in Christianity, and *are* the doctrines of Holy Writ.

The doctrines now taught by Methodism were also taught in Germany during the palmiest days of the Reformation. MELANCTHON held them. LUTHER toward the end of his life endorsed them. The greatest lights of the Reformation in England also maintained them; while in Holland, they were nobly upheld by ARMINIUS. Mr. Wesley revived them, and they are now received by the majority of living Christians.

You are aware that the doctrines of Methodism are often called Arminianism. They are so named after JAMES ARMINIUS, of whose history I will give you a brief sketch.

D'AUBIGNE has eloquently and truly remarked that "Men, like stars, appear on the horizon at the command of God!" James Arminius was one of these stars. By his light, God saved his church from the gloom and darkness of the stern and unscriptural theology of John Calvin.

Like most great men, James Arminius sprung from the people, and not from the titled ranks of society. His father was a mechanic, ingenious and respectable, but comparatively poor. James was born in 1650, at Oudewater, in Holland, and was bereft of his father while yet an infant. A learned clergyman kindly received him under his roof, and superintended his education. When fifteen years of age, Arminius was deprived of this friend by death. But his extraordinary talents attracted the attention of one of his townsmen, a learned man, who took him to Marpurg, in Hussia, and caused him to enter the university. While here, our young theologian, now converted to God, was deprived of his mother, brother, and

sister. They perished in the overthrow of Oudewater by the Spanish army.

In 1575, Arminius removed to Leyden and entered the university just established at that place by the Prince of Orange. Here he continued six years; when the municipal authorities of Amsterdam assumed the expense of his future academic studies, on condition that his ministry should be exercised in that city, and that he should dispose of his services only as they might approve.

We find him next at Geneva, for a brief period; then, at Basle for a year; and then for three years again at Geneva. His academic studies concluded, he made a short tour in Italy; tarried awhile at Padua; and then, returning to Holland, he was ordained pastor of the Dutch Church in Amsterdam, in 1588. In 1603, he was elected Professor of Divinity in the University of Leyden; and on the nineteenth of October, 1609, he died a calm and peaceful death, at the age of forty-nine years.

Arminius was held in very high estimation, for his attainments and genius, while he



was a student ; and his success and popularity as a minister and professor fully justified the high opinion formed of him by his tutors and fellow-students. But the latter years of his life were embittered by the hostility of his Calvinistic adversaries, whose malevolence, it was thought, contributed to render the disease of which he died, fatal.

His controversy with the Calvinists was brought about by a request of the ecclesiastical senate of Amsterdam, that he would refute the alleged errors of a pious minister, named COORNHERT, who had assailed the opinions of Calvin on Predestination, &c., some nine years previously. Applying his mind to the fulfilment of this request, he was led to such an examination of Calvin's dogmas as resulted in a conviction that they were unscriptural, and in the adoption of those opinions to which his name has since been attached. The violent assaults of the Calvinistic party on himself, and on his opinions, led to the writings which constitute his "works."

After the death of Arminius, his followers



were cruelly persecuted by the Calvinists. A synod was called at Dort, in 1618, by which the Arminians were pronounced heretics, were excommunicated, driven from their churches, imprisoned, fined, and banished. Their name became a by-word and reproach among their enemies. And it has been a favorite practice among Calvinists, from that time until now, to call almost every form of doctrinal error Arminianism. "If a man held that good works are necessary to justification ; if he reject the doctrine of original sin ; if he deny that divine grace is necessary for the whole work of sanctification ; it is concluded that he is an Arminian. But the truth is, that a man of such sentiments is a disciple of the Pelagian school. To such sentiments pure Arminianism is as diametrically opposed as Calvinism itself."

There is yet another misrepresentation of Arminianism which your proselyting friends may use to excite your prejudices. They may tell you, in the words of a recent writer, that *Romanism* has its "basis in the

Arminian doctrines." "Romanism," they may say, "like Methodism, denies the doctrines of election, of efficacious grace, of perseverance; it inculcates the existence of sinless perfection, and even more, of works of supererogation; that is, becoming more than perfect. And *with these Methodist doctrines* Romanism has wrought with fearful power."

But you must not permit such a statement as this to influence your action, because it is utterly groundless. By looking at the eleventh article of religion in the Discipline (p. 4) you will see that it denounces works of supererogation thus: "Voluntary works, besides, over and above God's commandment, which are called *works of supererogation*, cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety."

With respect to "sinless perfection," Mr. Wesley says it is a "phrase I never use." It has never been taught by the Methodist Church.

Nor is it true that Romanists are generally Arminians. They have always had no in-

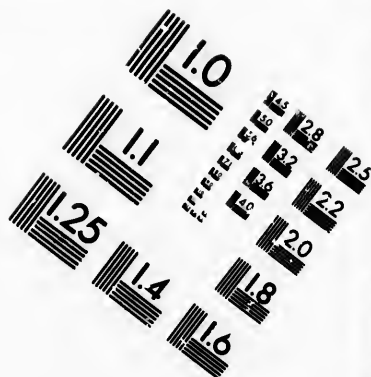
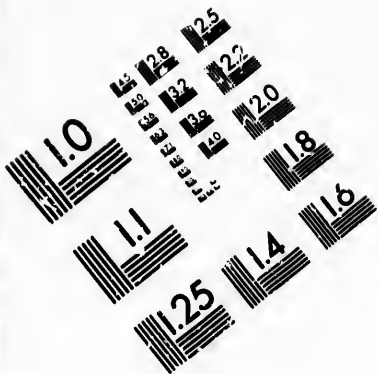
considerable number of believers in the dogmas of Augustine in their communion. Says Mosheim, (vol. 3, p. 106,) "The Dominicans, (the most powerful of the monkish orders) the Augustinians, the followers of Jansenius, and likewise many others, deny that divine grace can possibly be resisted, \* \* \* deny that there are any conditions annexed to the eternal decrees of God respecting the salvation of *all* men, and other kindred doctrines;" in other words, these orders and sectaries of the Romish Church teach the views of high Calvinists. And when Luther and his coadjutors taught the opinions which entered into the scheme of Arminius, the Romish Church, says Mosheim, approved "Augustine's sentiments," which are substantially identical with Calvin's. The truth is, the views which distinguish both the Arminian and Calvinistic schools have always been largely represented in the Papal Church, and so long as both parties were otherwise faithful to her claims, she has tolerated both. It cannot be said of Romanism that it has been or is Calvinist or

Arminian. It has been, and still is, both, and neither scheme of theology is responsible for its errors.

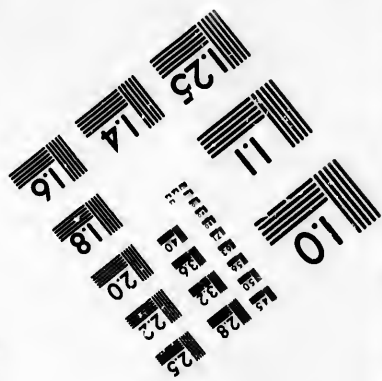
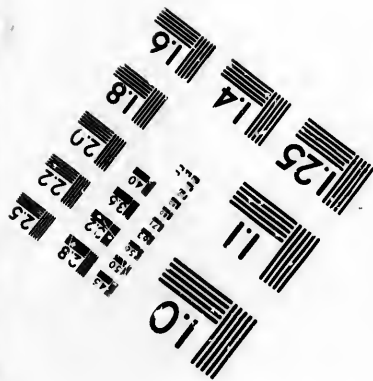
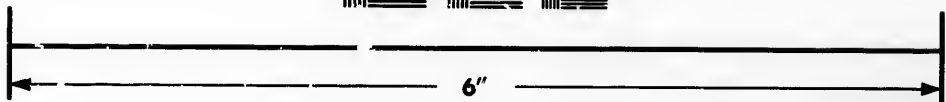
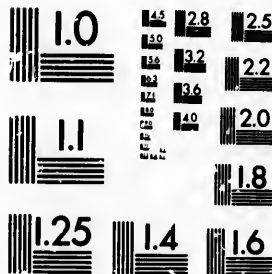
Thus, you see, this attempt to identify Methodist doctrines with Romanism is futile. It stands on assumptions which are historically false, and cannot therefore command your credence.

Hold fast then, beloved convert, to Methodist doctrines. They are scriptural, reasonable, full of comfort, full of power to meet the demands of your spiritual nature. Under their inspiration the primitive church spread itself over the world. They begat holy courage in the confessor, and heavenly heroism in the martyr, during the heroic age of the church. They gave life to the best period and the best advocates of the Reformation. Their proclamation by Wesley and his coadjutors woke the slumbering church of the last century to new life; and gave birth to a spiritual quickening which saved Christianity from the death which threatened it, and which is felt to this day all over the Christian world. Supported by





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them, millions of holy souls have successfully solved the awful problem of their probation, have triumphed in their conflict with death, and have departed to reign with the Great Teacher by whom they were revealed. Hold them fast, therefore, and they will guide you to their Author's throne.





## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FOUNDER OF METHODISM.

THE Oriental world produces a singular tree, which, in several of its characteristics, not unaptly illustrates the rise and growth of Methodism. This tree is called the BANYAN TREE, it has a woody stem, branching to a great height and vast extent. Every branch throws out new roots, which descend to the earth, strike in, and increase to large trunks, from which new branches grow, and new roots are again produced. This progression continues until the original tree literally becomes a forest. In like manner, Methodism, beginning with a single society, threw out branches with depending roots. These roots, striking into new portions of the community, grew into new churches. These again were reproductive. This progress has steadfastly continued. It continues now.

Little more than a century has elapsed since it threw up its first shoot ; yet, rooted in every quarter of the globe, it already bids fair to cover the earth with its branches, and to fill the world with its influences.

The creation of this great spiritual fellowship, numbering in all its branches nearly *three millions* of communicants, in so short a period, is a phenomenon unparalleled by any fact in the history of the Christian Church since the apostolic era. Who can study the simplicity of its beginnings, the rapidity of its growth, the stability of its institutions, the amazing power of its influence on Christianity in general, its present vitality and activity, its commanding position, and its prospective greatness, without exclaiming in a spirit of astonishment and gratitude, "What hath God wrought?"

I have already pointed out numerous spiritual advantages, which you may personally enjoy in the fellowship of Methodism. I now wish you to take a broader view—to stand like a traveller upon a mountain's peak, and survey the system from its beginning

until now,—to study the character of its founders, mark the hand of God in its surprising development, examine its vast spiritual results, and convince yourself that, of all existing churches, it is the most highly honored of God, the most beneficial to the world. Let us glance first at the man by whose piety, labors, and genius it arose.

Methodism, considered as an organization, is of recent date. It sprang, as you know, from the pious labors of the two Wesleys and their devoted compeers. John Wesley, however, must be regarded as its true founder. But for him, though there might have been a powerful revival of spiritual religion, there would, in all probability, have been no Methodist church. He alone possessed the faculty of organization and government, which was necessary to gather up, combine, and construct the spiritual results of the revival into a church. He led the great Methodistic movement, and stamped the image of his own mind upon it. He devised the simple institutions, organized the ministry, and governed the societies, which, in

their development, grew into the various Methodist churches now existing in different parts of the world. It will, therefore, be proper to give you a brief sketch of his life and character.

JOHN WESLEY was born in the rectory of Epworth, England, June 17, 1703. His father, SAMUEL WESLEY, the rector, was a scholarly, pious, sternly energetic, independent man,—a true man and a faithful minister. His mother, SUSANNA WESLEY, was a woman of extraordinary intelligence and force of mind, of correct judgment, vivid apprehension of truth, and ardent piety. Under their training, Wesley passed his boyhood up to his eleventh year, his mother paying peculiar attention to the formation of his character, because of his singular escape, when a little boy, from his chamber, when the rectory was destroyed by fire. He was educated, first at the Charter House, then at Oxford. He was ordained a deacon in the Church of England, 1725. The next year he was elected a "Fellow" of Lincoln College, and in 1728 was ordained a priest.

For a few months, he acted as curate for his father at Epworth. But being strongly urged to become the tutor of several young gentlemen at Oxford, he returned thither in 1729. His first act, almost, was to form a society composed of himself, his brother Charles, Mr. Morgan, and Mr. Kirkham. The object of this society was "to promote each other's intellectual, moral, and spiritual improvement." To accomplish this, they spent "three or four evenings a week together, reading the Greek Testament, with the Greek and Latin classics. On Sunday evenings, they read divinity." They also adopted various rules for the better government of their lives, and the improvement of their time. They visited the sick, relieved the poor, circulated the scriptures, fasted much, prayed much, denied themselves of every sinful amusement and indulgence, attended the means of grace very strictly, and sought to reach the highest possible spiritual attainments.

This strict course of life, so unusual among the inmates of the college, soon

brought down an avalanche of persecution upon their heads. Scorn, rebuke, insult, fell upon them abundantly, from all quarters. Their fidelity to their sense of duty cost them the good opinion of most of their college companions, who stigmatized them with such titles as the "Holy Club," the "Godly Club," the "Enthusiasts," the "Reforming Club," "Methodists," "Supererogation men," and so on. But, like their Master, they stood undaunted in the presence of persecution. Its only effect was to stimulate their zeal, quicken their devotion, and increase their numbers.

You will observe, my dear reader, that although these young men were termed Methodists at Oxford, by way of ridicule, yet Methodism proper was not yet organized. That band of young men did not constitute a "Methodist Society." Its members were only styled Methodists by way of reproach, just as spiritually minded men had been called "Methodists" in a sermon preached at Lambeth a hundred years before, and at several other times and places. The first

Methodist "Society," properly so called, was not formed until 1739, when Mr. Wesley organized "the United Society," at the Foundery, in London. This, says THOMAS JACKSON, in his life of Charles Wesley, p. 179, "was the rise of the United Societies which now constitute what is usually called the Wesleyan Connexion." The rules for their government were drawn up in 1743, by Wesley, when he divided the Societies into classes.

After spending nearly six years as a tutor at Oxford, Mr. Wesley, having refused the rectorship of Epworth, made vacant by his father's death, sailed with his brother to Georgia, hoping "to raise up a holy people in that distant land." He was not very successful in his labors. The loose manners of the colonists called forth his sternest rebukes, which, with the strictness of his own life, and the stringency of his ecclesiastical discipline, excited great opposition. A bitter persecution, headed by a worthless official named CAUSTON, arose against him. The colony resounded with the outcries of his adversa-



ries. They propagated all sorts of slanders about him, and finally presented him to the grand jury. This jury, which was packed with his avowed enemies, brought in two bills containing ten counts, nine of which related to his ecclesiastical administration. The whole, if true, did not affect his moral or religious character in the smallest degree. But they were all either false or frivolous, as was shown in a paper sent to the trustees of the colony, by twelve of the jurors who dissented from the majority. After seeking in vain to obtain a hearing before the court, and seeing no opportunity for further usefulness in Georgia, Mr. Wesley, having given public notice of his intention, left Savannah, and returned to England, where he arrived, in February, 1738. After his departure the true character of his chief persecutor, Mr. Causton, became apparent. That worthy had already left England, in disgrace, for a fraud on the Government. Detected in a similar peculation in the colony, he was deposed from office by the Governor. And such was the reaction of public feeling in Mr. Wesley's



favor, that when Mr. WHITEFIELD visited Savannah, a few months after Wesley's departure, he wrote thus :—" The good Mr. John Wesley has done in America, under God, is inexpressible. *His name is very precious among the people !*"

The only fault committed by Mr. Wesley in Georgia, was his perhaps too rigid enforcement of the canons of his church. His moral character was unspotted. His religious life was strict, almost ascetic. For these things worldly-minded professors, and world-seeking colonists, hated him. Methodists have no need to blush for that part of their founder's life spent in Georgia.

Up to the time of Wesley's return to England, he had not enjoyed a clear consciousness of faith in Christ. His religion was that of the legalist, consisting in unceasing devotion to the duties, unaccompanied by the consolations, of an Evangelical faith. His voyage to America had introduced him to the Moravians. What he saw of their experience convinced him that his own religious life was defective, and prepared

him to listen to his learned friend PETER BOHLER,\* through whose instructions he was led to trust in Christ alone for "the righteousness which is of faith." On the 24th of May, 1738, while listening to a discourse on Christian experience, he says: "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death." He was then thirty-five years old.

With an overflowing heart Mr. Wesley now began to proclaim the doctrine of salvation by faith, first in the churches, and then, at the suggestion of his friend Whitefield, in the open air. The effect was instantaneous and wonderful. He seemed girded with power from above. Wherever he preached men were pricked to the heart. Streams of blessings poured from heaven upon his labors. His brother Charles, his friend Whitefield, and several other clergy-

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\* Pronounced *Bayler*.—Ed.

men of the church of England, were equally successful. Men and women were converted by thousands. The expiring dissenting churches of the day were quickened. New life impregnated British Protestantism. The infidelity of the age was rebuked. Hundreds of men were thrust out into the ministry. Societies were formed in all parts of the kingdom. A conference of ministers was organized, and, at length, a powerful connexion established.

These results were not accomplished without great toils, great sacrifices, great sufferings. To achieve them, Mr. Wesley preached *forty thousand* sermons, and travelled *two hundred and twenty thousand miles*. He, with his coadjutors, also endured much persecution. I know it has been tauntingly said, that Methodism "cannot boast of the honors and unmistakable characteristics of Christ's church—the loss of *one drop of blood*, a beheaded saint, *persecution*, a flight, or having been hid from the rage of enemies for a season." "And that no Methodist was ever beheaded for his attachment to the

truth ; never persecuted to *death* or to *flight*, for his religion.”

These statements are slanderous. A man who would make them, would affirm that light is darkness, if it suited his purpose. Methodism never persecuted ! Alas ! how ignorant or depraved that writer must be who so affirms ! Methodism never persecuted ! What is the history of its infancy, but a record of persecutions ?—aye, of persecutions as thrilling and severe as those recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. True, the fact of its rise in a Protestant and nominally Christian country, prevented its confessors from sealing their faith on the scaffold. But if it be persecution to suffer the loss of reputation, the spoiling of goods, personal violence, judicial accusations, imprisonment, fines, and to be put in constant peril of life, then the early Methodists have suffered persecutions abundant, and the assertion of the writer referred to is as false as his favorite dogma, that the Baptist is the only true church of Christ on earth.

In order to refresh you with a few pictures

of the unsurpassed heroism of the early Methodists, I have brought together a few facts from the history of the Wesleys.

I have already told you how the Wesleys were persecuted by their college associates at Oxford, and how John suffered for his religious strictness in Georgia. But when the devoted brothers broke away from the *order* of the church, and began their extraordinary career of evangelism, the outcry against them was so loud and general as to put them outside the pale of respectable society. They were excluded from the pulpits of the Church of England, denounced by nearly all, regarded as enthusiasts and madmen, and treated as the "filth and offscouring of all things." So strong did the current of prejudice run against these great and good men, that he who dared to defend them, periled his own reputation. "How notorious is it," says Wesley, "that if a man dare to open his mouth in my favor, it needs only be replied, 'I suppose you are a Methodist too,' and all he has said is to pass for nothing!" A fact or two, selected at ran-

dom from their memoirs, will show that this expression was far from being hyperbolical.

At ST. IVES, the rector of the parish church publicly denounced Charles Wesley and the Methodists, as enemies of the church, seducers, troublers, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites. At WEDNOCK, the curate, Charles Wesley being present, delivered himself of such a "hotch-potch of railing, foolish lies, as Satan himself might have been ashamed of." During his first visit to Cornwall, the "clergy preached against him with great vehemence, and represented his character and designs in the worst possible light." At CORK, in Ireland, the grand jury found "Charles Wesley to be a person of ill fame, a vagabond, and a common disturber of his majesty's peace," and they prayed that "*he might be transported!*" And at Birstall, in 1744, a charge of *treason* was preferred against him, and a warrant issued summoning witnesses to appear against him!

If a good man's reputation is next in value to the purity of his character—if it be a jewel of higher value than the diadems of

princes, dearer to a man of a high sense of honor than even life itself, then it is clear that the early Methodists demonstrated their fidelity, when they cast it away for Christ's sake. To say that a people who purchased their ecclesiastical existence with the loss of their reputation were never persecuted, is to drivel, not reason.

But the early Methodists did not escape with the loss of reputation alone. They were persecuted to the spoiling of their goods, to flight, to stoning, to suffering, and even to death, as the following facts, selected at random from a multitude of similar events, will abundantly prove.

For crossing the field of an enemy to religion to meet his congregation at Kensington Common, Charles Wesley was fined fifty dollars, with costs amounting to as much more.

At NOTTINGHAM, the rabble of the county laid waste all before them that belonged to the Methodists. Two of the brethren lost a thousand dollars' worth of their property.

At ST. IVES, while Charles Wesley was



preaching, the people beat their drums, shouted, stopped their ears, ran upon him, and tried to pull him down. With a fearless spirit the heroic reformer retreated from these "lions' whelps," and escaped unhurt. At MORVA, just as he named his text, an army of rebels broke in upon his meeting, threatening to murder the people. They broke the sconces, dashed the windows in pieces, bore away the shutters, benches, poor-box, and all but the stone walls. Several times they lifted their hands to strike Mr. Wesley, but a stronger arm restrained them. They beat and dragged the women about, particularly one of great age, and "*trampled on them without mercy.*" At WEDNOCK, the mob, says Charles Wesley, assaulted us with sticks and stones, and endeavored to pull me down. Ten cowardly ruffians I saw upon one unarmed man, beating him with their clubs till they felled him to the ground. Another escaped by the swiftness of his horse. At St. Ives, again, the mob threw eggs in at the windows. Others cast great stones to break what remained of the shut-



ters. Others *struck the women*, and swore they would pull the house down.

During one of his tours in Ireland, Charles was riding with several brethren from Tyrrell's Pass, to Athlone, when he was beset by a company of Papists. One of his companions was knocked from his horse by a stone, beat in the face with a club, and would have been killed with a knife but for timely aid. Another was struck on the head with a stone. Wesley received a violent blow in the back. But for the timely arrival of a company of dragoons from Athlone, the whole company would, in all probability, have been murdered. This murderous assault was planned and instigated by Father Ferrill, a Catholic priest.

At CORK, the Methodists were sorely persecuted. Many of the baser sort, from time to time, cut and beat both men and women, to the hazard of their lives. It was dangerous for any member of the society to be seen abroad.

At WEDNESBURY, in October, 1743, Mr. John Wesley was greatly maltreated by a

mob, which was instigated to drive him out of the county by the incessant denunciations of the vicar of the place, the Curate of Walsal, and the Vicar of Darlastan.

After preaching at Wednesbury, Mr. Wesley retired to write at the house of a friend. The mob surrounded the house, shouting:—"Bring out the minister! We will have the minister!" After some parleying, Mr. Wesley showed himself at the door, and asked to go with them to a magistrate. It was now dark and raining. But they dragged him to Bentley Hall, two miles distant. From thence they took him to Walsal. At last they concluded to conduct him back to Wednesbury; but on their way met another mob, and fell to fighting among themselves. As they re-entered Wednesbury, Mr. Wesley, seeing the door of a large house open, attempted to enter, but one of the mob caught him by the hair of the head and pulled him back into the middle of the crowd. They then carried him the entire length of the town. Seeing another door half open, Wesley made toward it, but was forbidden to

enter by the owner, lest the mob should pull it down over his head.

Wesley now confronted his foes, and asked, "Are you willing to hear me speak?"

"No! No! Knock his brains out! Down with him! Away with him, kill him at once; tear off his clothes! Drown him! Hang him on the next tree! Throw him into a pit!" yelled the mob, waxing increasingly furious.

"Nay, but we will hear him first!" cried others; while others again said, "Don't kill him here, carry him out of the town! Don't bring his blood upon us!"

He then spoke for a quarter of an hour, till his voice failed. The mob then renewed its shouts, threatening him with violence. At length, three or four stout fellows, one of whom was the ringleader, moved by a sudden impulse, resolved to rescue him. After much struggling and hustling, they got him out of the town, on to the meadows. When the crowd, wearied with its own violence had retired, these men conducted him to his lodgings. His clothes were torn to tatters; he

had been struck at repeatedly, and many had tried to pull him down.

During this frightful scene the members of the society, excepting four who kept with him ready to die with him if they could not save him, had fled for their lives. Yet the mob threw one woman into the river, and broke the arm of a young man.

Commenting on his remarkable deliverance from this mob, Mr. Wesley refers to similar hair-breadth escapes from the "sons of Belial," in the following language: "Two years ago a piece of brick grazed my shoulders. It was a year after that a stone struck me between the eyes. Last month I received one blow, and this evening two; \* \* one man struck me on the breast with all his might and the other on the mouth, with such force that the *blood gushed out immediately!*"

When the ringleader of this furious mob was converted, as he was a very few days afterwards, Charles Wesley asked him what he thought of his brother. "Think of him?" he replied, "that he is a man of God, and

God was on his side, when so many of us could not kill one man!"

At DUDLEY, says C. Wesley, the Methodist preacher was cruelly abused by a mob of Papists and Dissenters. Probably he would have been murdered but for an honest Quaker who helped him to escape with his broad hat and coat.

At DARLSTON, rioters broke into the houses of the Methodists, robbing and destroying; and papers were sent round to the adjacent towns *inviting all the country to rise and destroy the Methodists!*

"At NOTTINGHAM," says C. Wesley, "I called at Bro. Saut's, and found him just brought home for dead. The mob had knocked him down, and would probably have murdered him, but for the cries of a little child. It was some time before he came to himself, having been struck on the temples by a large log of wood."

Up to 1744, the magistrates had generally refused to act, and had left the Methodists at the mercy of violent and cruel men. Then they interfered, and endeavored by an

abuse of their power, and the perversion of law, to crush a defenceless people. This made their condition worse.

Another species of indignity to which the early Methodist preachers were subjected was their impressment into the British army, on the pretence that their occupation was irregular, and their lives vagabondish. Among those who suffered in this way, were JOHN NELSON, THOMAS BEARD, MR. DOWNES, and MR. MAXFIELD. These devoted brethren were torn from their families, shut up in prison, and compelled to do military duty until their friends procured their deliverance by application to the heads of the Government, or by procuring substitutes. But poor THOMAS BEARD found deliverance through death only. He was too delicate to endure the fatigues of a soldier's life. He sank beneath the burden, and died as truly a martyr to Christianity as Paul or Peter.

But I must cease my citations. I could fill this volume with the details of the persecutions endured by the first generation of

Methodists for the Gospel's sake. No historic fact is more certain than that Mr. Wesley, with most of his early preachers could adopt in substance, the language of the persecuted and laborious Paul, and say, "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned. \* \* In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils amongst false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness."

Having endured "hardness like a good soldier," and having reached the green old age of eighty-eight, John Wesley died, March 2nd, 1791. His death was as beautiful as his life was active. He retained his vigor to the last, and died almost on the field of battle, exclaiming, as he prepared to cast aside his mortal robe: "THE BEST OF ALL IS, GOD IS WITH US. He causeth his servant to lie down in peace. The Lord is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.



I'll praise. I'll praise! Farewell." And thus, with the song of a conquerer on his lips, he ascended to heaven.

Before calling your attention to the spiritual structure founded by this great reformer, I will point out some interesting resemblances between him and the hero of the "Reformation," MARTIN LUTHER. Though somewhat episodic, I know you will not object to it, because you are anxious to attain a true conception of the founder of our church.

To begin with their birth, I find LUTHER born and nursed in the lap of respectable poverty. WESLEY had a kindred origin. For, although the family at EPWORTH could boast a higher lineage and a superior social grade to that of the German miner, yet, it is questionable whether the pecuniary straits of the good rector, Wesley's father, at Epworth, were not as pinching as those of Luther's peasant parents at EISLEBEN. And, if young Luther, after the fashion of poor German students, sung songs at EISENACH for bread, young Wesley, like many other



English scholars, obtained his education from the munificent provisions of the Charter House, and from a foundation scholarship at Christchurch; and at which places he doubtless endured more from the merciless despotism practised upon a poor "fag" in those days than Luther ever suffered in his peregrinations as a beggar student.

*Intellectually*, they appear to have belonged to the same high grade of minds. They were both master spirits, "large in heart and brain;" yet, perhaps, neither of them can properly be classed with the very highest order of philosophic intellects, the splendor of whose genius places them in unapproachable grandeur, far above the ordinary level of mankind. Still, they were great men, and men of extraordinary powers. To both, the acquisition of learning was easy; and, as in their youth both led a scholastic life, they became superior scholars, thoroughly versed in the classics, well read in general literature, in theology, and particularly in the Holy Scriptures. Both had remarkably ready and retentive memories;

large powers of perception and comparison ; and hence, they both became admirable dialecticians. In original imaginative power, I incline to give the palm to Luther ; while, in everything relating to taste, the laurel must be placed on the brow of Wesley. They both appear to have possessed the power of realising truth in an unusual degree. To them, their ideas were as living presences, in whose reality and truthfulness they believed as firmly as in their own consciousness. Hence proceeded that wondrous vigor which characterized their preaching and writing ; which made their thoughts glow with the energy of life, and gave their words a force that was irresistible and overwhelming.

In their early religious experience, we find some points of dissimilitude. Luther, though always bearing an unstained moral character, was not serious in his childhood and youth. He relished the facetious and military amusements so beloved by German students ; and his mind turned with strong aversion from the serious aspects of the

priesthood, and even from the gravity of the law. A sudden judgment—the death of a companion, struck down at his side by a flash of lightning—first turned his mind to sober thoughts of spiritual things. That catastrophe, acting upon his impulsive nature, led to a sudden revolution in his purposes. It sent him to the monastery at ERFURT. It made him a priest.

But Wesley was always serious. His pure life knew no episode of frivolity or worldly folly. At the age of eight years he partook of the sacrament, and was grave and prayerful from his boyhood to his tomb. Yet had they this in common: they both struggled for a long time in darkness, through ignorance of the great doctrine of justification by faith. Both sought for peace on the ascetic principle—by works. Bitter tears did Luther shed in his lonesome cell, cruel penances did he undergo, long fastings and weary watchings did he endure, in the vain hope of finding relief. And by severe self-denial, by long and frequent prayers, by self-sacrificing acts of bene-

volence, Wesley toiled to secure intercourse with Heaven. Of course they both failed. But in the conflict the monk of Erfurt suffered more than the "fellow" of Oxford; for his mental agonies well nigh cost him his reason. This was partly owing to the solitude in which he lived. His mind had no relief through contact with the world. It was shut up to its own reflections. Had Wesley, with his almost equally intense mind, been confined, like his great prototype, he had doubtless suffered with equal anguish. But he, while unresting and sad at heart, found some relief for his feelings in the ceaseless, self-imposed activity of his life.

Luther penetrated the gloom which enveloped him, unaided by man. By profound reflection on the Word of God, illuminated by the Divine Spirit, he discovered the sweet doctrine that man is justified by faith alone. This delightful truth broke in upon his long, dark night of grief, like a bright and beautiful star, and it guided him to a

peace so delightful that he declared it was like entering the open portals of Paradise.

It was otherwise with Wesley. He was led to the discovery of this cardinal truth by the guidance of human minds. To me it is one of the most wonderful facts in history, that a mind so clear and logical, so well read in the homilies of his church, and the writings of the Reformers, so conversant with the Bible, so sincere, so earnest in its seekings after truth, should miss of finding this simple doctrine. What is it but a singular illustration of human blindness in spiritual things, without the light of the Holy Spirit? Perhaps it was necessary to fit the learned Oxonian for his mission, that his steps should be directed to Christ through the instrumentality of the simple-hearted Moravians.

But these great spirits resembled each other in that utter unselfishness and purity of intention which are the essential elements of the martyr-spirit. Luther's worldly interests were on the side of silence towards the abuses of the papacy. Had he sought

to secure them, there is little question that he might have worn a mitre. The same is true of Wesley. But the history of both men shows that, in their respective movements, they ignored all selfish considerations, and deliberately placed wealth, reputation, and personal safety on the altar of duty. Wedded to truth, they were dead to all other voices and charms. Hence, Luther, with all his greatness, lived in poverty, and died leaving only a house and a legacy of a thousand florins to his beloved CATHARINE, and her children. Wesley, too, though considerable sums of money passed through his hands, died comparatively a poor man, owing to his systematic and princely benevolence, having no property except his publications, which he bequeathed to the Connexion.

Again, I see a marked agreement between them in their habit of acting independently, and from their own self-determinations. Neither of them despised the counsels of other men, but neither acted from *mere* advice. Their decisions were made from the depths of their own minds, after a calm and



careful survey of the path to be trodden, and prayerful application to heaven for light. Thus, Luther's first denunciations of TETZEL, his burning of the papal bull, his appearance before the diet at Worms, his marriage with the nun, CATHARINE VON BORA, with all his great movements, proceeded from his own purposes independently formed, and carried out on his own personal responsibility. The same things are equally true of Wesley. His own mind always chose the path he trod, and chose it distinctly as being its own choice—its own view of duty. Eminently, therefore, did these great men possess the quality of self determination.

In *courage*, too, they were equally heroic and sublime. They both stood firm and undaunted in danger; immovable and unchangeable in difficulty. Luther's courage is unquestionable. The man, who, with the fate of HUSS before his eyes, with the dust of unnumbered martyrs floating on the winds over every part of EUROPE, could stand up and strike a blow for which they had perished, who dared to smite a foe which, BRI-

ARIUS like, could stretch forth a hundred arms of power, and whose voice made monarchs tremble in their palaces—that man was no coward! Without the loftiest courage how could he have stood undaunted in the German Diet, before nearly three hundred dignitaries, to assert truths which, for a thousand years, men had not dared to speak? The brave knight, GEORGE FRUNDSBERG, did not over-estimate his peril, when he said to him as he entered the Diet:—“Monk! look to it! you are about to hazard a more perilous march than we have ever done!” But he did hazard it, with more than knightly courage: and his bravery stands unimpeachable.

Nor was Wesley less courageous than Luther. True, he never threw himself on the bosses of the papal buckler, for he had no occasion; nor did he ever confront a royal Diet; but he did frequently do that which demanded equal-self-possession, and equal heroism. He stood unappalled in the midst of furious mobs which clamored for his life, and threatened to tear him in pieces.



The man who could do this, could have denounced the Vatican, or stood unmoved in the halls of kings, had circumstances required. His courage, like Luther's, grew out of an absorption in the great object of his mission, so complete as to make him superior to every sign of personal danger. As in the Royal Diet, Luther forgot himself in his desire to give utterance to truth; so, in the mobs of England, Wesley's heart burned with a desire to save his angry enemies, so earnest, it excluded all thoughts of himself. The courage of both rested on moral principles, for neither of them possessed that *natural* courage which led NELSON to say he "never knew fear;" and which rendered him perfectly indifferent amid showers of cannon balls. The terror of Luther at his companion's death, and Wesley's fear of death in the Atlantic storm, show that their natural courage was not uncommon. Theirs was a moral heroism, sustained by moral forces, and not by mere animal stoicism.

In zeal, in moral energy, in unceasing industry, they were both examples. Luther

did the duties of a university professor, of a preacher, and an author. His writings, like Wesley's, are a library in themselves; while the amount of travel and of preaching performed by Wesley almost exceeds belief.

As writers, they are alike distinguished by the nervousness, vigor, directness, and boldness of their style. Luther is the better polemic of the two; Wesley the more spiritual and apostolic; Luther is diffuse; Wesley is concise and epigrammatic; Luther uses the most rhetoric, but it is sometimes rude and coarse; while Wesley, rigidly simple and unadorned, always writes with purity, and even delicacy. Both are distinguished for their habit of deferential appeal to the Scriptures as the source of all authority, and the only standard of truth.

Viewing their religious character, we give the preference to Wesley. His repose on Christ was more calm and abiding than that of the great German. Luther was subject to tormenting mental conflicts, and to seasons of deep depression. Wesley rested in calm, almost undisturbed, composure upon God.

Luther was less meek, less patient, less gentle than Wesley. He dealt more harshly with his adversaries, and displayed a temper and stubbornness, at times, which mar the beauty of his piety. Wesley, on the contrary, was mild and gentle, even toward his enemies. Though he exercised a vast amount of power over his societies, toward the last of his life, yet he never used it harshly or severely. He regarded his societies as his family, his children, beloved in Christ; and his authority was that of the mildest and most tender parent. But it ought not to be forgotten that Wesley's early training, by his excellent mother, gave him the advantage, in matters of self-discipline, over Luther. Besides this, the manners and spirit of Luther's times must be considered. He had to do with headstrong and fiery minds, and to endure harrassing trials; he had to watch against an intriguing priesthood, who thirsted, like wolves, for his blood. In fact, his public life was mostly passed in a whirlpool of tumultuous human passions. That he should, under such cir-

cumstances, yield, at times, to the natural impetuosity of his temper, is not surprising. Had he, however, possessed the clear, triumphant faith of Wesley, he might have won a more perfect victory, and have become a more complete example of the truth he taught.

Other points of comparison crowd upon me, but I forbear; and close with a glance at their respective labors. Yet who can either estimate or compare the labors of these two reformers? To estimate the value of their work is impossible; for it is, as yet, incomplete. They still live. Their spirits still animate society, and not until the last judgment will it be possible to measure the extent and value of the work they wrought.

But their labors may be compared. Thus viewed, the reformation of Luther appears to have prepared the way for the Wesleyan revival. Luther's mission was chiefly to emancipate thought—to set mind free from the chains of authority—to teach ecclesiastical and civil rulers, that they have no

control over the human conscience. The means by which he did this, was the simple assertion of evangelical doctrine in opposition to papal heresies. He affirmed every man's individual right to judge of all questions of truth and duty, independently of priest, pope, or council. By thus establishing the paramount authority of conscience and Scripture, he paralyzed the arm of the Papacy, he freed vast numbers from its bondage, and taught them to exercise the right of private judgment, and of freedom to worship God. In the performance of this great work, the truths he uttered became a seed of *spiritual* life to many; but, mainly, his reformation was rather a reformation of opinion—a declaration of religious liberty—than a spiritual revival.

In this mixed form the "reformation" found its way to Great Britain, where it produced the Scottish Covenanter and the English Puritan. By their sturdy fidelity, and by their swords, the great idea of the Lutheran Reformation—religious liberty—was firmly established in British institu-

tions; but its *spiritual* element, when Mr. Wesley appeared, had well nigh exhausted itself, and spiritual religion was almost extinct there, and throughout the world.

Wesley's mission was, therefore, to revive the spiritual element of the Lutheran Reformation. But for Luther, he would have had to do Luther's work. But that being done, the doctrine of religious liberty being understood and established, it was given to him to spread a new religious life throughout his country and the world. This, by the grace of God, he accomplished. His voice woke the reformation from its slumber, roused it to an evangelic vitality—such as it never previously enjoyed; and which has since spread itself through many lands. Thus while Luther's work prepared the way for Wesley, Wesley put new life into the Lutheran Reformation, and pushed it to glorious spiritual results. And now that the Christian life, evoked by their instrumentality, flows on, in one widening, deepening, branching stream of blessedness, to all parts of the earth; ere long all nations

shall hail it with joy ; and, when all have tasted its blessedness, the world will do equal honor to both, as great, good, and mighty men of God, entrusted by him to do a good work, and as having proved faithful in the execution of that high trust. May their spirit live and abide in the church forever. Amen !





## CHAPTER VII.

### RISE AND GROWTH OF METHODISM.

As from the smitten rock in the wilderness, the abundant waters flowed at the bidding of the Almighty, to quench the thirst of a feverish and fainting people, so did Methodism flow forth to give fresh life to the expiring Christianity of the age. Its birth was from above, and its author was the Holy Ghost. The Wesleys, Whitefield, and their coadjutors, were only the instruments of its propagation. On being powerfully converted, those holy men, following the impulses of the spiritual life, went forth preaching the truth, and seeking to spread scriptural holiness over the land of their birth. The idea of founding a church did not enter into their conceptions for many years; and when it appeared necessary to the spiritual welfare of his *societies* that they should be

organized into *churches*, Mr. Wesley accepted the idea as a necessity, and provided for its realization with manifest reluctance. He had no ambition to be the founder of a sect. That honor was awarded him by the Providence of God.

I have attributed the rise of Methodism to the Spirit of God. Am I not right? Whence did it come, if not from the workings of that Holy Being? It certainly did not spring from the English Episcopal Church, for that church did not give the Wesleys a clear conception of the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith only. They were indebted for their perception of that truth to Peter Bohler, and the Moravian brethren. Hence, the human instrumentality through which the spiritual life of Methodism flowed was not the Episcopal, but the Moravian Church. But the Moravians were only *instruments*. The life of Methodism came from heaven, when, on the evening of May 24, 1738, God "strangely warmed" John Wesley's heart, and gave him assurance that he "had taken away" his sins.

That experience was Mr. Wesley's Pentecost. Three days before, Charles had experienced a similar baptism. By the self-same Spirit, the brothers were made new men in Christ Jesus. Hitherto, they had been *servants*; now they were *children*. From this time, as with the Apostles after their Pentecost, a divine energy attended their preaching. Vast multitudes were awakened and converted. These new-born souls, attracted to their spiritual parents and to each other, by the affinities of their new interior life, met, like the disciples in the primitive church, for prayer and spiritual fellowship. They desired Mr. Wesley's advice. For the sake of convenience and order, he formed them first into societies, and then into classes. When these societies multiplied he drew up "rules" for their government. When the Holy Spirit moved numbers of the converts to preach the gospel, Wesley employed them with manifest reluctance at first, to call the nation to repentance. When these preachers increased, and God had abundantly owned their labors, he was fully satisfied that

their vocation was from above; and, therefore, in 1744, he formed them into a Conference. Thus he proceeded, step by step, wisely providing for exigencies as they arose, but never anticipating the progress of events. His aim was strictly a spiritual one. His personal wish was that his societies should remain in connection with the Established Church. But God overruled that wish, and he was compelled, at last, to give them the only remaining thing necessary to constitute them churches of Christ, viz., the privilege of having the sacraments administered by their own preachers, and in their own houses of worship. When this was yielded, they ceased to be mere *societies in a church*—they became churches of Christ, having within themselves all the elements which went to make up the apostolic church, viz., an interior life derived from the Holy Spirit, the preached Word, the ordinances of the gospel, meetings for Christian fellowship, government. In one word, they were essentially identical with the first church at Jerusalem, which is described as receiving the “word,”

the ordinances, and as continuing in "fellowship" and in prayers. See Acts 2 : 41, 42.

Such, in brief, was the rise of Methodism in England. Small in its beginning—a cloud no bigger than a man's hand—it grew with wonderful rapidity. It throve in spite of the scorn of the rich, the contumely of the proud, the persecutions of the ministry, (the dissenting clergy not excepted,) and the barbarity of mobs. Like the chamomile, the more it was trampled upon, the more it flourished. Hence, when Mr. Wesley died, *fifty-two* years after he organized the first Methodist Society, properly so called, his societies in Great Britain alone, included upwards of *eighty thousand* souls.

In America, the rise of Methodism was also distinctly marked by the finger of God. His providence provided for its existence on this Continent through several instruments. To New York he directed the steps of PHILIP EMBURY, a local preacher from Ireland, who arrived in that city in 1765. The absence of spiritual help, and the irreligious influence

of the time, caused Mr. Embury to neglect his soul, and to grow worldly. To revive him, God led an elect lady, BARBARA HICK, with her family, from Ireland to New York. In her heart the fires of grace burned gloriously. Her rebuke awoke the backsliding local preacher to a sense of duty. He returned to his Redeemer, preached the gospel in his own house, formed a class, hired a room for public worship, and thus laid the foundations of the Methodist temple on this Continent.

But if these emigrants at New York had failed to plant the good seed of Methodism, CAPTAIN WEBB, converted under Wesley, a "man of fire," was residing in Albany, faithfully cherishing the life of God, and ready to embrace the first opportunity to sow the living seed of truth. But Embury was before him in the work; and him the Captain greatly assisted while in New York on a visit, and afterwards when he became a resident of Jamaica, L. I. By their mutual labors, Methodism was planted in New York. In 1768 it sent out its utterances from its

first American chapel on Golden Hill, in John street.

Still another instrument for its propagation rose up in Maryland, in the person of ROBERT STRAWBRIGDE, also a local preacher, from Ireland. He brought a warm heart over the Atlantic, and, like a faithful man, began preaching in his own house, as soon as he was fairly settled. His success was such that a society was formed, and a log chapel built, about as early as the chapel in New York.

Thus you see how God cared for Methodism in America, by directing these local preachers to three different points, and by guiding the steps of a pious matron to the doors of the slumbering Philip. Was ever event more signally marked by the finger of God?

I cannot detain you to watch the growth of this "mustard seed," as it grew into the great tree which it has since become. It is enough to state, that in the brief period of little more than a century from its original planting, it has become the largest, fairest,



statliest of ecclesiastical trees; its branches  
overspread the earth, its fruit imparts life to  
*nearly three millions* of communicants, and  
its doctrines are preached to probably *not  
less than twelve millions* of the human race!



## CHAPTER VIII.

### SPIRITUAL RESULTS OF METHODISM.

To understand the spiritual results of Methodism, my dear reader, you must first glance at the religious condition of England and America; at the epoch of its rise.

What was the spiritual state of England prior to the appearance of the Wesleyan evangelists? I do not exaggerate when I say that it was in the lowest possible condition of religious torpor and indifference. The shadow of an almost starless night spread over the land. The clergy of the Established Church were mostly unconverted men, teachers of a Pelagian theology, and sadly lacking in that high purity of life which is so essential to ministerial influence. The Presbyterian clergy were mostly floating in the putrid sea of a self-indulgent Antinomianism, or gliding in

luxuriant ease down the smooth waters of a self-complacent Socinianism. The dissenting clergy, generally were lethargic, formal, dead. DODDRIDGE, WATTS, and a few others, were bright exceptions; but their influence was limited to narrow circles; their light scarcely relieved the general gloom.

As it was with the clergy, so it was with their flocks. The churches seemed under the power of a Lethean draught. They mostly slept, as if oblivious of the calls of duty, the warnings of retribution, and the woes of humanity.

As a consequence, irreligion stalked over the land with a haughty, philosophic skepticism at her right hand; a course, blustering infidelity at her left; and a host of blar-eyed immoralities in her train. The nobles, the statesmen, the literary men of England, did not scruple to deride evangelical religion with their lips, and to insult its moralities in their practice. "There was no *thinking* at that time," says Isaac Taylor, "which was not atheistical in its

tone and tendency." The middle classes were immersed in the sea of avarice; the lower orders were abandoned in the grossest vices. "The moral and religious defection which obtained," says DR. MORRISON, "was *extraordinary and almost universal*." "The higher ranks of society," says DR. CORBETT, "viewed the ordinances of religion with indifference, and the poorer classes had sunk into the grossest vices." In Calvinistic Scotland, the case was no better. REV. JAMES ROBIE, of Kilsyth, in 1740, said: "For some years past there hath been a sensible decay as to the life and power of godliness. Iniquity abounded, and the love of many waxed cold. Our defection from the Lord, and backsliding, increased fast to a *dreadful apostacy*. While the government, worship and DOCTRINE, established in this church ARE RETAINED IN PROFESSION, THERE HATH BEEN AN UNIVERSAL CORRUPTION OF LIFE, reaching even unto the sons and daughters of God."

Was the spiritual condition of America any better when Whitefield, glowing with

Methodistic life, visited its coasts; and when, subsequently, Philip Embury raised the banner of Methodism in New York? Let Mr. Tracy, the historian of the "Great Awakening," answer. Referring to the period of Whitefield's labors, he says:

"The doctrine of the 'new birth' as an ascertainable change, *was not generally prevalent* in any communion when the revival commenced."

"The difference between the church and the world was vanishing away. Church discipline was neglected, and the *growing laxness of morals was invading the churches*. And yet never, perhaps, had the expectation of reaching heaven at last, been more general, or more confident. Occasional revivals had interrupted this downward progress, and the *preaching of sound doctrine* had retarded it in many places, especially in Northampton; but *even there it had gone on*, and the hold of truth on the consciences of men was sadly diminished. The young were abandoning themselves to frivolity, and amusements of dangerous tendency, and party

spirit was producing its natural fruit of evil on the old."

Again he says (in 1740), "A large majority in the Presbyterian church, and *many, if not most, in New England*, held that the ministrations of unconverted men, if neither heretical in doctrine nor scandalous for immorality, were valid, and their labors useful."

Of the churches in Rhode Island, in 1740, WHITEFIELD, as quoted by Tracy, says: "ALL, I fear, place the kingdom of God too much in meats and drinks, and have an ill name abroad for running of goods."

Again he says, while in Boston, "I am verily persuaded the *generality of preachers talk of an unknown and unfelt Christ*; and the reason why congregations have been so dead, is because they have had DEAD MEN PREACHING TO THEM." Again: "Boston \* \* has the form kept up very well, but has *lost much of the power of religion*. I have not heard of any remarkable stir in it for these many years."

In 1743, Rev. Messrs. Messenger and Ha-

ven, of Natick, say: "For a long time past the power of godliness has been evident but in comparatively few instances."

Rev. John Porter, in 1743, says of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, "Experimental religion and the power of godliness seemed to have taken their flight from Bridgewater. The greater part of the people who thought of religion at all, rested in various duties short of a saving closure with Christ."

Rev. N. Leonard, of Plymouth, Mass., writing in 1744, says: "It pleased God to cast my lot in the first church and town in the country, twenty years ago. Religion was then (i.e. in 1724) under a great decay; most people seemed to be taken up principally about the world and the lusts of this life, though there appeared some serious Christians among us who bewailed the growth of impiety, profaneness, Sabbath breaking, gambling, tavern-haunting, intemperance, and other evils, which threatened to bear down all that is good and sacred before them. We were sensible of an awful degeneracy. \* \* Iniquity pre-



vailed, and we were in danger of losing the very form of godliness."

Rev. Samuel Davies, of Virginia, writes in 1751: "Religion has been, and in most parts of the colony still is, in a very low state. \* \* Family religion is a rarity. \* \* Vices of various kinds are triumphant, and even a form of godliness is not common."

Rev. Jonathan Dickenson, of Elizabethtown, New Jersey, says: "Religion was in a very low state, professors generally dead and lifeless, and the body of our people careless, carnal, and secure. There was but little of the power of godliness appearing among us until some time in August, 1739, when there was a remarkable revival at Newark."

Of the Presbyterians throughout the land, in 1740, Mr. Tracy says they admitted "to the full communion of the church, persons who gave no evidence of regeneration. The doctrine of the new birth ceased to be regarded in the administration of the ordinances; \* \* as a natural consequence,

*it practically slipped from the minds both of preachers and hearers."*

Rev. S. Blair, of New Londonderry, Pennsylvania, in 1744, says: "People were very *generally, through the land*, careless at heart, and stupidly indifferent about the great concerns of eternity. There was very little appearance of any hearty engagedness in religion. \* \* It was sad to see with what a careless behaviour the public ordinances were attended."

The eloquence and piety of Whitefield kindled a bright light in this hour of gloom; but being fed with Calvinistic theology only, it soon lost its brilliancy. The bones of that apostolic man were scarcely deposited in their sepulchre at Newburyport, before another fearful apostacy spread the pall of death over the churches of America.\*

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\* "With all the accession of strength," says Mr. Tracy, "that religion received from the revival, *it did but just stand the shock, (of the revolution)*, and for a long time, many of the pious feared that *everything holy would be swept away!!* Strengthened by so many tens of thousands of converts, and by the deep sense of the importance of religion produced in other tens of thousands, both in and out of the churches, religion survived, in time ral-

So that at the advent of American Methodism, the moral and spiritual condition of this country was scarcely better than that of the Fatherland when Wesley arose.

Thus, in both lands, Methodism rose like a bright, particular star, in an hour of deep and fearful gloom. What did it accomplish? In general terms it may be replied that it was the instrument, in both countries, of a revival of spiritual religion, which for depth, intensity, extent, permanency, duration, and humanitarian influences, has no parallel in the History of the Christian Church since the apostolic age.\* Its results are not to be estimated by the numerical strength of the Methodistic body. Wonderful as is the cre-

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lied and advanced, and is marching on to victory." (*Great Awakening*, p. 421).

The *Puritan Recorder* of August 31, 1854, describing the state of religion at the epoch of the revolution, confirms Mr. Tracy. It says: "It is well known how disastrous to religion were the influences attending that war, and what *wide spread religious declension followed.*"

\* Methodism gained more members to its own communion in its first century, than the apostolic church during *its* first century. At the end of the *first* century of the Christian era, there were 500,000 Christians; at the end of its first century, Methodism had 1,423,000 communicants—a number nearly *three* times greater.

ation of such a body of spiritual people in so brief a period, its results outside of its own membership are yet more vast and astonishing. Did it not break up the formalism of existing churches, and impregnate them anew with that divine life which not only saved them from extinction, but which also started them on a career of progress that continues to the present hour? Did it not stop the march of infidelity, and thereby save England from the revolutionary vortex which swallowed so much of the blood of France? Did it not awaken that spirit of evangelical activity, which led to the conception and inauguration of the missionary and other ideas, now embodied in our various benevolent organizations? I do not claim that it did all these things *directly*; but I do claim that they have all grown out of the life to which it gave birth. They cannot be traced to any other cause. We can find their germ nowhere else but in the Methodistic revival: but for which one trembles to think what fearful moral desolation would have overspread the earth.

That you may see how this view is supported by large-minded men of other denominations, I will insert a few extracts from various sources below.\*

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\* DR. MORRISON says: "The Church of England received a mighty and hallowed impulse from the organization of Methodism. \* \* \* In referring to the influence of Methodism upon Dissent, it will be frankly conceded, by all competent judges of passing events, that it has told with prodigious effect upon its internal organization, and upon all its movements for the good of mankind. \* \* Methodism did much to bring on the great missionary crisis of the church \* \* It was the glory of Methodism that it seized with a giant grasp this great principle of the apostolic ministry."—*Dr. Morrison's Fathers and Founders of the London Missionary Society.*"

REV. RICHARD CECIL says: "They (the Methodists) have labored and not fainted in planting the gospel amongst the poor, and that with the most surprising success, even in the most dark and profligate places. \* \* Multitudes of genuine Christians could attest that under whatever denomination they now proceed, they owe their first serious impressions to the labors of these men."—*Cecil's Memoirs of Cadogan.*

DR. CHALMERS says: "Methodism is Christianity in earnest."

ROBERT HALL says: Whitefield and Wesley "will be hailed by posterity as the *Second Reformers of England.*"

SIR PETER LAURIE, a British magistrate, in a speech, said: "I would much rather see a Methodist chapel than a station-house. I would that all the country might embrace your sentiments and emulate your moral character; for then, indeed, no police would be heard of."

Similar testimonies abound with respect to American Methodism. I will quote a few.

The following paragraph is from the pen of DR. BAIRD, a gentleman whose extensive travel, and close and long-continued observation on the various religious systems of the country, en-

Nor has the spiritual life of Methodism yet begun to show symptoms of decay. Hav-

title his opinion to the very highest respect. He says: "No American Christian, who takes a comprehensive view of the progress of religion in his country, and considers how wonderfully the means and instrumentalities employed are adapted to the extent and wants of that community, can hesitate for a moment to bless God for having, in his mercy, provided them all. Nor will he fail to recognize, in the *Methodist economy*, as well as in the zeal, the devoted piety, and the efficiency of its ministry, one of the most powerful elements in the religious prosperity of the *United States*, as well as one of the firmest pillars of their civil and political institutions."—*Religion in America*, p. 249.

REV. DR. TYNG, in an address in London, before the Wesleyan Missionary Society, in 1842, said: "I come from a land where we might as well forget the proud oaks that tower in our forests, the glorious capitol we have erected in the centre of our hills, or the principles of truth and liberty which we are endeavoring to disseminate, as forget the influence of Wesleyan Methodism, and the benefits we have received thereby. \* \* The Wesleyan body in our country is what the Wesleyan body is throughout the world. \* \* Standing, I was going to say, manfully,—but I check the spirit, and say humbly,—at the feet of Jesus, *laboring for him*, and *accounting it its highest honor if it may but bear the cross*, while he, in all his glory, should be permitted to wear the crown."

The next extract is from a writer in the *Presbyterian Christian Herald*, quoted in Clark's *Memoir of Bishop Hedding*: "No pioneer gets beyond the reach of Methodist itinerants. Though he pass the Rocky Mountains, and pursue his game to the Pacific, he soon finds the self-denying, unconquerable, unescapeable Methodist minister at his side, summoning him to the camp-meeting, and winning his soul to Christ! Thousands upon thousands of pioneers, scattered like sheep and almost lost from the world, in those far-off wilds of the West, have blessed God for raising up Wesley and the Methodists."

ing lifted other sects up towards its own standard, its superior vitality may not be so apparent as when they were shrouded in formality; yet it is as real and robust as ever. A recent writer in the *North British Review*, whose objections to some features of the Wesleyan system prove him to be not of it, says: "We believe that the Wesleyan body contains *by far the largest per-centage of true religion and moral life of any sect in England.*"

A Congregational clergyman of Massachusetts, *naively* confessed this fact recently in a conversation with a Methodist preacher. He said: "We" (the Congregationalists) "always look to the Methodists to lead in a revival. I advised the pastor of a Congregational church in a town where the church was large and wealthy, but had not enjoyed a revival within the memory of its oldest member, to secure, if he could, the organization of a Methodist church there, because such a church would certainly exert a most beneficial influence on the general spiritual interests of the town; and particularly on



the spiritual life and vigor of that Congregational church." Thank God, Methodism retains the life God gave it when he converted the Wesleys; and if the culture of your spiritual life is the great object you seek in forming a church relation, you will regard it as the first of privileges to be permitted to enter its fellowship.

But the enemies of our church seek to divert attention from these wonderful and glorious facts, by pretending that in building up itself, Methodism inflicts injury on society. It brings, they assert, vast numbers of persons under the influence of religious excitement, and induces them to make spurious professions of conversion. One unscrupulous writer has said that of the number professing conversion at Methodist meetings, "*nine-tenths* of the whole are found to be spurious, after a longer or shorter trial!" Strange assertion! It carries its own contradiction on its brazen brow. It is even *absurdly* false. To be true no less than *one million two hundred thousand* persons, must have professed conversion in Methodist

churches, in Ontario and Quebec alone, for they contain about one hundred and twenty thousand communicants within their pale! A statement resulting in a consequence so manifestly impossible cannot be true. It is unworthy the serious attention of a sane man.

But I need not lead you through the fog with which its enemies seek to obscure the glory of Methodism. You will not be deceived nor turned aside from it, I feel assured. You cannot fail to see that God is with it. His grace is its garment. His arm its power. His strength its protection. His love the pledge of its perpetuity. His approval the diadem of beauty which crowns its brow. Go, then, beloved; go, kneel at its altar; enter its fellowship; drink deep of its spirit; emulate the zeal and purity of its master spirits; and thereby learn the truth of the dying words of its great founder—*the best of all is, God is with us.*

## CHAPTER IX.

### METHODIST CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

DID you, my reader, ever visit the Hartz Mountain, in Germany! If so, you heard at least of the celebrated spectre which haunts its summit. Perhaps you saw it,—a colossal figure crowning the summit of the Brocken, bending and moving, as if in imitation of your own gestures. If you stretched out your arms, the spectre did the same. If you bowed, the spectre returned the compliment; and you were thrilled with astonishment at the phenomenon. Yet you were not alarmed. Your scientific knowledge taught you that the gigantic image before you was merely the shadow of yourself, projected on dense vapors or fleecy clouds, which had the power to reflect light freely. Yet such was the impression it made upon

your mind, that you were not surprised at the marvellous stories to which it had given rise among the peasantry of the adjacent region. You could readily understand how superstitious ignorance could invest that spectre with the terror with which the imagination delights to clothe supernatural beings.

Now it is a curious fact that the adversaries of Methodism, whenever they turn their eyes towards its government, affect to see a spectre resting upon its dome. They take strange delight in harping upon what they are pleased to call its despotism. Its government has been called a "naked clerical despotism." Others take up the same cry, and our adversaries assail us with this charge of despotism for their battle-cry. We think it possible some of them may be ignorant enough of Methodism to believe their own assertions.

But the charge is false. Methodism is not a despotism, any more than the spectre of the Brocken is a reality. Like that figure the charge is proven to be a shadow—the

reflection of the thoughts of those who make it—having no substantial existence. True, its ecclesiastical forms were not cast in a republican mould. The democratic idea is not very legibly written in the letter of its discipline. A superficial observer, gazing on some of its arrangements, without taking into account the numerous checks which are everywhere thrown around those to whom it conveys power, might easily misconceive its principles, and misjudge its spirit and practical operations. While, to those who write in a bitter spirit, nothing is easier than, by exaggerating some features of the system, and suppressing others, to make out the plausible semblance of a strong case.

But there is a strong, and, as we think, unanswerable *a priori* argument against this charge, in the fact that those who are in the Methodist Church are utterly unconscious of the pressure of this alleged despotism. No Methodist feels oppressed by it. Methodist ministers and laymen maintain as much self-respect, feel as free in spirit, and are as unconstrained in their action, as the minis-

try and laity of the most ultra Congregationalist church in the land. No despotic arm terrifies them. No irresponsible authority oppresses them. No arbitrary inflictions gail them. How is this? How can this consciousness of freedom exist and flourish unchecked, if Methodism is such a system of despotism as its enemies declare it to be? It will not do to say that our people are not sufficiently intelligent to distinguish between liberty and freedom; for we hesitate not to assert that the *average* culture of our people is equal to that of any other large denomination in the land. How is it, then? There is but one answer. The despotism does not exist, save in the disturbed imaginations of our enemies.

What is despotism? It is absolute authority, irresponsible to constitutions, laws, or tribunals. But Methodism knows no such authority as this. Every man—minister or layman—upon whom it confers power, is controlled by rules, and held responsible to proper tribunals for the right exercise of his authority. Every officer's duties, from a

class leader to a President, are specifically defined; and the greater the power bestowed, the more strict is the responsibility which is exacted. While such restraints upon its authorities as these exist, Methodism cannot be considered a despotism. The grand fundamental element of despotism—absolute, irresponsible authority—is not found in the system.

Again I ask, what is despotism? It is irresponsible authority *reposing upon force*. The appeal of the despot is not to the consent of the governed, but to force. His authority is built, not on the enlightened affection of his subjects, but on the bayonets of his warriors. His arguments are chains, prisons, scaffolds. To talk about a despotism without force, is to drivel, not reason. There can be no despotism where there is no power to coerce obedience.

Still our enemies say Methodism is a “naked clerical despotism, that its ministers reign absolute over the whole body.” Where then is its *coercive power*? Where its means of enforcing obedience? It has none, abso-



lutely none. It reposes not on force, but on the opinions and choice of its members. This is its corner-stone. Robbed of this, it would dissolve like the "fabric of a vision." So entirely does it rely on the affectionate and voluntary support of the people, that it formally absolves them from *legal* obligation to render it that pecuniary aid which is essential to its operations. If the allowances needful for the support of its ministry are not forthcoming, there is no power by which the people can be coerced into giving. Did the world ever hear of a despotism throwing itself so completely on the affections and choice of its subjects? Never. How then can Methodism be despotism?

But, it may be alleged, Methodism gives the power of excommunicating the laity to the clergy, and this ghostly power is equivocal to coercion in its influence over the membership. Such an allegation at this is sheer nonsense. To an enlightened people, excommunication *without just cause*, has no terror, because it cannot affect the spiritual relations of the sufferer. Such excommuni-

cation in this country is at most but an annoyance, and is not even dreamed of among Methodists as a motive to hold them to its communion.

But even this power is not lodged absolutely in the ministry of the Methodist Church. Before excommunication can take place, a layman must be formally tried and condemned by a committee of *laymen*. He can appeal from a wrong verdict to a Quarterly Meeting, composed chiefly of *laymen*. He can finally procure the arrest of his pastor for mal-administration, at the bar of the Conference. Hence, if there was terror in an unjust excommunication, our laity are pretty effectually guarded against it. The ministry cannot use the power of excommunication as a means of coercing the submission of the people. To what, then, does all the power actually lodged in the hands of the ministers of the Methodist Church amount? Restrained on every side by checks and accountability, it cannot be arbitrarily exercised without bringing censure or deposition upon him who is weak or

wicked enough to abuse it. Reposing upon the affections and consent of the people, its abuse would be its destruction. How, then, can Methodism be a depotism, when it is manifestly lacking in the fundamental elements of a despotic power?

A third element of despotism is *centralization*. A despotism seeks to "concentrate the whole administration of the government in its own hands." It abhors the municipal idea. It frowns upon all local authority which is not responsible to itself, and dependent upon its will. For example, free municipalities are unknown in the confessedly despotic government of Russia. Their existence is little better than nominal, in despotically governed France. They flourish only in such countries as enjoy a limited monarchy, like England, or republican institutions, like the United States. But despotism eschews them. It loathes all local authority which is not dependent on itself. Centralization is its law, and wherever it exists all authority proceeds from it, is re-

sponsible to it, and exists only by its permission.

But is Methodism a system of *centralization*? Does it hold its members in bands of iron responsibility to a single central power? Does any supreme authority restrain the liberties of individual societies, and deprive local churches of their proper freedom? If so, where is that central power? If, as our enemies say, Methodism is a despotism, let that overshadowing, all-controlling authority be named? It cannot be done.

If such a power exist at all, it must be found in the *Conference*. But I affirm that it is not there.

What are the powers of the Conference?

1. It has *legislative* authority—"full powers to make rules and regulations for our church."
2. It has a certain measure of *judicial* authority—it is a high court of appeals from the judicial decisions of District Meetings, &c.
3. It possesses *executive* authority. It can elect its own officers. It confers administrative powers on chairmen, stationed preachers, stewards, and class-leaders. These

are large powers, we confess. Viewed apart from their limitations, they wear a despotic aspect. But it is neither just nor truthful to so regard them. They are not *absolute* and irresponsible powers; but they are so environed by restrictions and limitations, that notwithstanding their formidable appearance, they are not inconsistent with the liberties of both preachers and people.

Note, then, the limitations of these powers.

1. The restrictive rules remove several most important subjects from the sphere of its legislative jurisdiction. By forbidding it to change the doctrines and "General Rules," they deprive it of power to afflict the conscience of the church by forcing new opinions upon it, or to create any law for the government of its life, which is not already recognized in principle by the General Rules. Thus the religious faith and the moral duties of the church are not placed in the keeping of the Conference, and may not be altered by its authority. The principle of Methodism is, that God has determined these great matters, and that ecclesiastical

legislation can rightfully expound His teachings, and no more. The Methodistic exposition of them is in our articles of faith and General Rules, and the Conference is forbidden to alter it except with the consent of two-thirds of the Quarterly Meetings throughout the connexion. Hence the sphere for legislation by our Conference is mostly limited to *disciplinary* regulations.

2. The *judicial* power of the Conference is also limited. It cannot interfere directly with the action of the lower courts. With the "society," or its court of appeal, the Quarterly Meeting, it has no means of intermeddling. The decisions of the latter body are final and conclusive, unless exception can be taken to the administration of the preacher presiding at the trial. In that case, his administration is subject to examination by the Conference, and may there be finally determined. As a matter of fact, Methodist laymen are responsible to their peers only. They are not held judicially responsible to Conference.

With these facts I submit the question to

your good sense :—Can a Conference so limited, by constitutional restrictions, in the range of its legislative functions ; so dependent for the enforcement and administration of its disciplinary regulations on tribunals and administrators not judicially responsible to itself, and whose action is in a great degree independent of it ; so almost utterly deprived of coercive power,—can such a Conference be that centralized authority which men are wont to call a despotism ? Was ever government with such limitations pronounced a despotism before ? Never. So long as it is powerless to impose a new dogma on the belief, or a new rule of life on the conscience ; so long as it cannot arraign, try, or expel a single layman ; so long as the enforcement of its regulations depends on tribunals which it cannot coerce or control ; so long, it must be monstrously unjust and manifestly false to call it “a naked clerical despotism.”

Thus, my reader, you see that none of the elements essential to a despotism can be found in any part of the system of Metho-



dism. The government of the Methodist Church is not a despotism. Neither can it ever become such, so long as its existence depends on the consent and voluntary contributions of its members. Should it ever become oppressive, it would fall to pieces like a rope of sand. The people have but to withhold pecuniary support, as they would and ought to do, if treated with injustice, and the fabric would tumble into fragments. Deprived of the support of the people, the dependent pastors would be compelled to vacate their pulpits, for the Conference has no funds or other property with which to support them. So long as the ministry is thus directly and absolutely dependent on the people, there is, there can be, no possibility of the Methodist Church becoming a despotism.

It is sometimes said that the Methodist ministers either own or control the churches and parsonages erected by the people; that though this property is held by trustees, they are, in fact, appointed by and subject to the will of the pastor in office at the time. This

is another misrepresentation. Our ministers neither own nor control church property, as you may see by turning to that part of the Discipline of the Methodist Church which describes the duties of "the Trustees." That discipline provides, 1. That the minister may create "a *new* board of trustees," to hold property for the Methodist Church.

2. When a *vacancy* occurs in a board of trustees, it is the duty of the minister to *nominate* another person to fill the vacancy. The *appointment* of the new trustee, however, is with the trustees. If they are equally divided, the preacher has the casting vote.

3. Our ministry, either in their individual or associated capacity, have never claimed, nor do they hold, in law, any title to any chapel or parsonage by the deed of settlement. The fee of the land is vested in trustees, who hold the property in behalf of the connexion. The Conference claims merely the right to supply the pulpit, by such means as it shall elect, with duly accredited ministers and preachers of the Methodist

Church, "who shall preach and expound God's holy word therein."

From these facts it is obvious that the assertion stated above is utterly groundless. Our trustees are not "*appointed* by the pastor in office," (except when a *new board* is to be appointed.) They are not subject to the will of the pastor in office, for they are not *responsible* to him, nor can they be in any way controlled by him. The only right which Methodist ministers can legally enforce in our church property is that of preaching in the pulpits of our churches, and occupying our parsonages according to the intention of those who contributed moneys for their erection. Can any man show the injustice, or even the impropriety of such a claim? It cannot be done.

To comprehend and appreciate the government of the Methodist Church, you must view it from the same standpoint as they who constructed it. From that point alone, can you rationally expect to see it in its beauty, fitness, and excellence. If you study it from any other position, it will only per-

plex and confound you ; because you will fail to discover the motives and aims which it embodies. Those motives and those aims are the keys which unlock its gates, and unfold its wonderful adaptations to all candid beholders. Only seize them, and like Christian and Hopeful with their key of faith in the castle of Giant Despair, you will escape from the dungeon of perplexity in which those who assail it without understanding it would fain lock you up forever.

What, then, are the motives and aims incorporated in it ? You have but to refer to the life of Wesley, and the answer is yours. What great motive roused him to abandon the cloisters of Oxford and to devote himself to the work of an Evangelist ? Did he not say, like Paul, the love of Christ constraineth me ? That was his *motive*—the love of souls proceeding from the love of Christ. What was his *object* ? To spread scriptural holiness over the land and the world ! To these ideas, he and his coadjutors conformed the ecclesiastical system which they constructed, both in England and America. They regard-

ed it as an organization for the propagation of the gospel and the culture of piety in the individual heart. They took its *laws* from the Bible, which is the great constitution and statute book of Methodism. They framed its *discipline*, rather as a code of by-laws to provide for the execution of the divine statutes, than as a book of legislative canons. Hence, nearly everything in the discipline relates to the constitution of a series of *executive* bodies and officers charged with the execution, not of Mr. Wesley's laws, but of the precepts of Christ. The classes, love feasts, and prayer-meetings are for the fulfilment of Christ's law of Christian fellowship; the Board Meeting, the Quarterly Meeting, and the Annual Conference, are chiefly to secure wholesome discipline, and to make such secular and other provisions as may be necessary to the maintenance of a visible organization of Christians. The Conference is a legislative body, only so far as it determines for the church what moral practices the precepts of Christ require it to enforce, and what to reject ; and what executive me-

thods are best fitted to accomplish the grand end of the organization. In fact, many of its provisions under the latter head are merely *advisory*; for their observance is enforced by no penalty. All its rituals; its rules on preaching, on visiting from house to house, on the employment of time; its directions concerning public worship, singing, band societies, dress, marriages, &c., fall into this category. Thus its discipline is, as the name imports, more a book of provisions for the enforcement of the laws of Christ and the propagation of the gospel, than a code of legislative canons for the direction of the life. He who reads it aright will see its grand purpose to engage the whole church in unceasing effort to evangelize the world, standing out in bold relief on every page. He will see this purpose applied, with little regard to individual interests, tastes, or preferences. No provision is made for the toleration of indolence, ambition, or any other form of selfishness. Everything is made to yield to the demands of the spiritual nature

and the requirements of a vigorous gospel propagandism.

How beautifully is this illustrated in its *itinerancy*! Observing in the history of the primitive church, that it was most pure and most successful, when its ministry contained a large corps of *evangelists*; and that when evangelists generally became pastors, they lost both their piety and efficiency, Mr. Wesley seized on the idea of a ministry composed entirely of evangelists or itinerants. He saw that such a ministry would require great personal sacrifices on the part of the ministry, and severe trials of feeling on the part of the churches. The former must abandon the idea of a permanent and real home on earth; must consent to the systematic disruption of the social affections; must resign the quiet opportunities for intellectual culture and social influence which the permanent pastorate so abundantly provides; must expose their families to the social and educational evils inseparable from a pilgrim life; must accept, in a word, a life of incessant labor, unrest, and change. The



churches, too, must be sorely tried in *feeling* by such a system, though their trials are nothing when compared to those of the ministry. Mr. Wesley saw all this. But he also saw, that all these evils were outweighed by the superior vitality, activity, and spiritual results likely to proceed from it, and, therefore, he adopted it and recommended the American Methodists to do the same. Thus far, the result has justified his expectation. The Methodist itinerancy has been the most successful body of ministers known to the church since the day of Pentecost.

Some persons will tell you, it would be better if Methodism admitted the *laity* to a more direct participation in the government of the church than it now does. Perhaps it would. *Practically*, there is no church which furnishes freer scope for the activity, or defers more to the choice, of its laymen than ours.

I have now shown you that the government of Methodism is not a despotism ; that it cannot become so without self destruction, because its principal support depends on the

purely voluntary contributions of the laity ; that its ruling motive, object, and results justify its peculiarities ; and that though it does not yield so much power in *theory* to laymen, as some other systems, it actually concedes much in *practice*. These views will, I hope, satisfy you, that the attacks of our enemies are founded more in ignorance or malice, than in truth and fact. It would be easy to meet all their specific allegations in detail, but it is unnecessary in your case. What I have said is sufficient to convince you, that you have no possible risk of personal oppression in the Methodist Church ; that the only pressure you can ever experience from its government, will come in the form of effort to promote your holiness and usefulness, which is precisely what *you* desire. Hence, to *you* its government will be as acceptable, as its doctrines are precious.

And now, beloved convert, adieu ! Though strangers to each other, in the flesh, I trust we now feel one in spirit. This being so, you will follow the advice of my unpretending book, and become a willing member of

the great Methodist Communion ; in which case, I trust, we shall remain fellow travellers in the way of holiness, until we meet in the world of spirits. Should it then appear that my advice contributed to your glorious destiny, we will rejoice together, returning thanks to Him whose spirit led me to write and you to read. Until then, fare thee well.



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