



A  
HANDBOOK  
OF  
SCRIPTURAL CHURCH PRINCIPLES  
AND OF  
WESLEYAN-METHODIST POLITY AND HISTORY.  
*IN TWO PARTS.*

BY THE  
REV BENJAMIN GREGORY, D.D.

*Prepared by order of the Conference.*

*FOURTH THOUSAND.*

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE urgent necessity has long been felt for a Handbook of Wesleyan Methodist Church principles, history, and polity, which might be put into the hands of our intelligent young people and the conductors of more advanced classes for religious instruction; which might also meet the requirements of all who wish for authentic, sufficiently complete, and readily obtained information as to the origin, the progress, and the essential elements of Wesleyan Methodism, as to the gradual shaping of its highly developed organization, and the **Principles** which underlie its whole structure, and which animate the entire system. Much unhappy misconception prevails on all these points, and consequently much injurious misrepresentation. Many, indeed, during the last hundred and fifty years have undertaken various portions of this task, as occasion arose, and have performed their work with marked ability and success. A large proportion of Wesley's own Works consists of luminous expositions and powerful vindications of the rise and the steady growth of Methodism; and, since his day, not a few *Digests, Compendiums, Essays, and Tractates* in various forms on the same subject have done admirable service in accordance with their purpose. Amongst the best of these may be mentioned the productions of the Revs. P. Garrett (1826); Dr. Beecham (1829); W. J. Shrewsbury (1839); G. Turner (1841); E. Grindrod (1842); the Rev. T. Woolmer's small *Handbook of Methodism*, and similar manuals by the Rev. E. Workman and others; Dr. Williams on *The Constitution and Polity of Wesleyan Methodism* (1882); Mr. Pierce's invaluable octavo, edited by Dr. Osborn and

Dr. Jobson; and a rich series of masterly productions by Dr. Rigg, published during a period of well-nigh forty years. But not one of these subserved the purpose indicated above. A manual was seen to be needed with the like aim to that of several works by some of the most accomplished dignitaries of the Established Church, such as the *Theophilus Anglicanus; or, Instructions concerning the Church and the Anglican Branch of it* (1843), by the late Bishop Wordsworth, which has passed through many editions, and rendered incalculable service to the Established Church; and Dean Goulburn's *Holy Catholic Church*, "a course of methodical instruction on the subject" (1873), which is thrown into the catechetical form. And far superior to both these are the Handbooks for Bible-classes, with the like purpose, since issued by the Free Church of Scotland. In these the ground corresponding to that covered in the present single volume is partitioned into four distinct volumes: *The Church*, by Dr Binnie (1882); *The Sacraments*, by Dr. Candlish (1882); followed by *Presbyterianism*, by the Rev. J. Macpherson, M.A., and *Scottish Church History*, by the Rev. N. Walker; besides a supplementary volume on *The Irish Presbyterian Church*.

The question of a Handbook of this kind for Wesleyan Methodists was frequently raised in the Book Committee, and at length a recommendation was sent up from the General Book Committee to Conference that a Minister should be appointed to draw up a Manual of Wesleyan Methodist Church principles, history, and polity. The Conference adopted the recommendation; a Minister was appointed to undertake the task, with a carefully chosen committee to whom the work should be submitted, and by whom it should be approved in order to its acceptance by the Conference. The present volume is the result.

At the Œcumenical Methodist Conference, the Rev. J. Wood, in a remarkable address on **The Training of Children**, laid great stress on the necessity that the children of Methodist parents should "learn to regard Methodism, not as a mere human institution to which our partialities or our prejudices have attached us, but as a Divinely sanctioned system of religion and

happiness. **Methodist parents ought to make known to their children the distinctive principles of their denomination, that an intelligent choice may be made.** Parents who train their children on the principle that they may go to any church where they can feel most comfortable need not wonder when it seems most comfortable for them to go nowhere. If Methodism is the best for us, is it not likely to be the best for our children?"

Dr. Dale, in his memorable address to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference at Birmingham in 1879, remarked with great earnestness: "I trust the Methodists will perpetuate amongst themselves the traditions and history of the great movement with which the name of Wesley is so conspicuously connected."

Some such book as this was also felt to be most desirable for Candidates and Probationers for the ministry. The *Form of Discipline* (1797) requires as an indispensable qualification for the Methodist ministry the "**understanding and loving every branch of our discipline.** . And remember, a Methodist Preacher is to mind every point, great and small, in the Methodist discipline." In 1880 this fact was strongly emphasized:—

"Whereas, according to the original plan of the Theological Institution, one of the cardinal subjects to be included in the system of instruction was defined to be: '**The general principles of Church order and government, connected with a distinct exposition of our own established discipline, and of the proper methods of administering it for the purity, edification, and preservation of our Societies, and a view of the nature and importance of the pastoral office, with special reference to the duties and engagements of a Methodist Preacher;**' and whereas this subject has not hitherto been brought into sufficient prominence in the curriculum and time-table of the different branches of the Institution, in future the subject as above defined, especially so much of it as relates to the **History, general Economy, and Discipline of Wesleyan Methodism, shall form a regular part of the system of instruction, and occupy a fixed place in the college time-table**" (*Minutes*, 1880).

In the Protestant Episcopal Church of America, it is required of every Minister "to be diligent in informing the youth and others by catechetical instruction in the constitution of the Church." It is hoped that our *Handbook* may be found helpful

to Wesleyan Methodist Ministers in their efforts to discharge the same duty.

It has been thought better to follow the course taken by the authors of the Free Church *Handbooks for Bible-classes*—the treating first of the New Testament idea of the Church, and then of our own historic denominational endeavour to realise that ideal. This was thought to be better than the plan pursued by Dean Goulburn, for example: the mixing up of the question of New Testament Church principles with the quite distinct question of the Scriptural soundness of the structure and arrangements of any particular Church. Accordingly, Scriptural Church principles are here ascertained before the history and polity of Wesleyan Methodism are enquired into.

The *Handbook* has been thrown into the catechetical form from the conviction shared with the great majority of experienced teachers: "That the catechetical form is decidedly the most effective, to maintain attention, elicit intelligence, convey information, and, most of all, to apply instruction to the heart" (Bridges' *Christian Ministry*).

There seems to be a peculiar timeliness in the appearance of this long-desired *Handbook*, on the eve of the third jubilee of Wesleyan Methodism. What more seemly or more suitable celebration of that Jubilee can there be than an intelligent and earnest recurrence to the leading facts of our marvellous history and to the Scriptural principles unfolded by it?

Of course, the size of the *Handbook* is limited by considerations of price and portability. It is thought that the Ecumenical Methodist Conference is the event at which the present volume may most fittingly terminate. As to Histories of Methodism, besides those referred to in the body of the book we may mention Dr. Smith's admirable *History of Methodism* (three vols.); and a very able, but as yet incomplete, series of articles in the *London Quarterly Review*, on the successive secessions from Wesleyan Methodism.

Although this Handbook is prepared by order of the Conference, it is not at present officially authorised.

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# A HANDBOOK OF SCRIPTURAL CHURCH PRINCIPLES.

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## INTRODUCTION.

**What need is there, and what Scriptural warrant, for a Handbook of Scriptural Church Principles and Polity?**

The Scriptures expressly enjoin the giving to the children of the Church a clear and satisfying explanation of the Church's institutions, appointments, and observances. The Bible assumes that the young will naturally wish to know the reason for and the meaning of such institutions, appointments, and observances, and that it is incumbent on their elders to be ready with such explanations. "It shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, **What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say,**" etc. (Exod. xii. 26). "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; **that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever**" (Psalm xlviii. 12-14). Note, the instruction of each successive generation in the principles, institutions, and history of the Church is here enjoined, and is connected with the continuity of the Church from generation to generation. "Sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done," etc (Psalm lxxviii. 2-7).

**But is there any present necessity for such a Handbook?**

The necessity is very pressing. A hundred years ago, John Wesley wrote: "A more ambiguous word than this, the **Church**, is scarce

to be found in the English language" (Sermon lxxiv. 1). And the various theories which have been originated or revived since those words were published—notably the Tractarian, the Broad Church, the Irvingite, and the Plymouth Brethren theories—have tended still further to confuse the Scriptural conception of the Church.

**How may we gain true ideas with regard to the Church of Christ?**

By consulting "the Scriptures of truth."

**Why the Scriptures?**

Because the Scriptures are the only authentic and authoritative sources of information with regard to the purpose of the Divine Founder of the Church, and the principles and plan on which it was founded.

Since, then, there is a source of information on this question so trustworthy, so accessible, and so authoritative, how is the existence of so many conflicting theories as to the Church to be accounted for?

Simply from the fact that the authority of Scripture has not been submitted to. Theories have been started to support the claims, assumptions, and pretensions of bodies of men, to justify the actually existing state of things in some community, or to suit the taste of individuals or classes of men.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE SCRIPTURAL IDEA OF THE *CHURCH*.

**What, then, is the Church of Christ "according to the Scriptures"?**

According to the Scriptures the Church is the Society or Brotherhood founded by Christ Himself, for the embodiment, the preservation, and the propagation of His religion, and the carrying on and carrying out, in His bodily absence, of His own mission to mankind.

### **How does it appear that the Church was founded by Christ Himself?**

By His own express declaration, "I will build My Church" (Matt. xvi. 18). Besides, His object was not only to teach a religion, but also to found a Society. The whole strain of His teaching and the declared purpose of His Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension, and the Mission of the Holy Ghost, strongly pointed to, and rendered necessary, the formation and continuance of such a Society or Brotherhood.

### **What do you mean by a Society?**

A Society is an enrolled and privileged Brotherhood : (1) formed for an express purpose ; (2) with clear and fixed terms and form of admission ; (3) with mutual rights and claims ; (4) with regularly appointed officers ; (5) with privileged meetings of its members ; (6) with the power of excluding unruly or disreputable members, and deposing unfaithful or discreditable officers ; and (7) with the power to provide for its own continuity.

### **What Scriptural authority have you for calling the Church a Society, or Brotherhood, in the sense above defined?**

The proof of this is most conclusive. Christ Himself says to the members of His Church, "All ye are brethren" (Matt. xxiii. 8). In the Epistles, and the Acts of the Apostles, the distinctive name for Church-members is "brethren," "the faithful brethren;" and the appellation by which they are addressed is, "brethren," "holy brethren," "beloved brethren;" and in a striking quotation from a prophetic Psalm, "the Church" and the "brethren" of Christ are given as parallel expressions. "I will declare Thy Name unto My Brethren; in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee" (Heb. ii. 12).

### **But is the Church an enrolled Brotherhood?**

That it was at the beginning is indicated by striking modes of expression; *e.g.*, "The number of names together were about an hundred and twenty" (Acts i. 15); "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis" (Rev. iii. 4).

### **How do you prove that the Church is a privileged Society?**

That idea is contained in the very word which our Lord chose by

which to designate that Society,—the **Church**. The Greek word, **Ecclesia**, which, in our English Bible, is translated **Church**, designated the body of free citizens who were in exclusive possession of the franchise and all other rights of citizenship, in contradistinction to foreigners, and slaves, and outlaws who had forfeited the franchise by their crimes. The root-meaning of the word is, the **called-out**. Hence the idea of privilege and distinction belongs essentially to the word, and could not but be conveyed by it. Promiscuous or indiscriminate inclusiveness is absolutely forbidden by the very term itself. Hence the word presented itself to the Greek translators of the Old Testament, from whom our Lord and His Apostles took it, as by far the aptest rendering for the Hebrew word which designated God's ancient people in their relation of **special privilege** to Him and to each other, in **contrast** with all other nations. That Hebrew word means the assembly **called** together, of which the root-idea is the same. The nearest possible English translation of the Greek word is, the **called-out**; of the Hebrew word, the **Called-together**. The Hebrew word had reference, in the first place, to the **call** of Abraham, and in the second to the calling of Israel out of **Egypt**. The latter call is especially alluded to by Hosea: "When Israel was a child then I loved him, and **called** My son out of Egypt" (Hos. xi. 1). The word there represents the people of Israel as a community **definitively separated** from all other communities, and bound together by a common religious belief, a common worship, common religious festivals, and peculiar religious privileges. We need only instance the first and the last two cases of its occurrence in the Old Testament: Lev. iv. 14 and 21: "The **congregation** shall offer it. It is a sin-offering for the **congregation**;" Joel ii. 16: "Gather the people; sanctify the **congregation**;" and Micah ii. 5: "The **congregation** of the Lord." In searching for the nearest Greek equivalent for that word, the devout Jew could not take any word associated primarily with Gentile worship, which was idolatrous and unholy. It must also be remembered that the ancient Gentile states and cities were united by common religious rites as well as by political privileges; so that neglect of those rites on the part of a citizen was treason to the State. It is plain, also, from the New Testament and early Church-history, that the idea of indiscriminate inclusiveness in the Church was altogether foreign to the Church's mind. It first appears after Christianity became the religion of the State. The primitive Church was "the **household of faith**," a **home**; not a hostelry, hotel, or **public hall**, as the Broad Church theory would make it.

**Are there clear and fixed terms of admission into the Church? If so, what are those terms?**

Those terms are: Repentance, faith in the ever-blessed Trinity, Confession of Christ, and Baptism. The commission of Christ to His Church is: "Go ye and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing** them into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," etc. "He that **believeth** and is **baptized** shall be saved." The injunction of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost is: "**Repent** and be **baptized** every one of you" (Acts ii. 38). And this agrees with the preaching of John the Baptist; and it follows the supreme precedent of our Lord's own ministry.

**What proof have you that Christ founded His Church for an express purpose, namely, the embodiment, preservation, and propagation of His religion, and the carrying out of His mission to mankind?**

Christ's own declaration to His disciples after His resurrection: "**As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you**" (John xx. 21) Christ has delegated to His Church His work. (1) Of **Invitation** (see Parable of the Marriage Feast). (2) Of **Teaching**: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and **teach all nations**" (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19). (3) Of **Sympathy and Restoration**: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. vi. 1, 2). "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity," etc. "To do good and to communicate forget not," etc. (Heb. xiii. 3, 16). (4) The proclamation and the positive and effective announcement of pardon to the penitent believer in Jesus; and the as effective denunciation of obstinate unbelief: "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John xx. 22, 23). All Church arrangements and modes of procedure must be made with a view to the fulfilment of this grand commission, and all Church polity must be judged of by this standard.

**You say, "in Christ's bodily absence." Why do you introduce the word bodily?**

Because that is the only sense in which He is absent, or has ever gone away. Christ is not only the Founder of His Church; He is also its living legislative Head.

Then the Church cannot be a mere human society or corporation?

By no means. That is the High Church and Broad Church blunder. The Church is not only an organisation; it is also a living organism, of which the Spirit of Christ is the animating principle. Whilst outwardly, to human observation and history, it is an institution, inwardly it is a spiritual fellowship. It is the gathering together in one of Christ's disciples. In the beginning it was "the Lord" Who "added to the Church;" and He added "such as were being saved"—were already under the influence of His saving grace. A faithful Church is the organ of Christ's Spirit. It is such in its disciplinary decisions: "If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 17, 18, 20). The Apostles and Elders, with the whole Church, say: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us" (Acts xv. 28). It is the Holy Ghost Who hath made all true pastors "overseers" of the flock of God (Acts xx. 28).

The Church is Christ's Body, the organism through and by which He still acts upon the world and carries on His own benignant mission. The work entrusted to the Church of Christ is such as utterly transcends all but Divine capability, all but Divine energy and enthusiasm: "The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform this." And yet it is to be achieved by human instrumentality. His zeal inspired their breast who have "done exploits" in accomplishment of the Church's work. "The Lord working with them, and confirming the word," is the explanation given of the wondrous triumphs of primitive Christianity. "The Lord added to the Church daily." Behind the human agency was the Divine Power. Without this, the enterprise of the Church would be futile and fanatic. Whilst "always abounding in the work of the Lord,"—for it is His work, "the Lord's doing," and therefore "marvellous in our eyes,"—and always engaged in "the wars of the Lord," the Church can never be cut off from its Source of supply "within the veil," except by its own treachery or cowardice. "Zion, let not thy hands be slack! The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He will save" (Isa. ix. 7; Mark xvi. 20; Acts ii. 47; Zeph. iii. 16, 17).

Next to the contemplation of redeeming love, Church History is the entrancing study of the angels. "To the intent that now unto the

principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." The Church is the great arena for the display of the Divine wisdom to the highest orders of intelligence.

**What are the mutual rights and claims of the members of the Church ?**

Above all and through all, **mutual love**. This is also the outward badge or distinctive mark of living membership in the living Church, without which "disciples" must fail to be recognised as such by "them that are without;" as saith our Lord: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." From this mutual love flows mutual **forbearance** (Eph. iv. 2); mutual **forgiveness** (Eph. iv. 32); mutual **instruction, admonition, and encouragement** (Col. iii. 16); mutual **reception, i.e., frank and hearty recognition and admission to fraternal intercourse** (Rom. xiv. 1, xv. 7); mutual **comforting and exhortation and edification, i.e., building up in Christian knowledge and attainment**; and mutual **oversight and incitement "to love and good works"** (1 Thess. iv. 18, v. 11; Heb. x. 24, 25); mutual **confession and intercession** (James v. 16); and mutual **burden-bearing** (Gal. vi. 2). Add to this the obligation to part with even life itself in the interests of the brotherhood (1 John iii. 16).

The other essential elements of the Church as a Society will require more extended treatment.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH.

*The Pastorate, the Diaconate, the Mutual Ministry.*

**What "officers" are to be regularly appointed in the Church ?**

Every lawful voluntary Society has the acknowledged right to appoint its own officers. Our Lord Himself selected, appointed, and trained the earliest officers in His Church, as was meet; and that at the very beginning of its formation. He "also **named them Apostles.**"

**What is the signification, and what the significance, of the word Apostle?**

The Greek word **Apostle** means a person sent from some Power on some special mission, with special instructions, and with the special powers necessary for fulfilling that commission and carrying out those instructions ; whose office terminates when his special work is done. The English word which most nearly represents both the classical and the New Testament use of the word is, **Envoy, or Plenipotentiary, or Commissioner.**

**What, then, was the special mission of the Apostles?**

It was (1) to bear witness to the historical facts, and to authoritatively proclaim and record the revealed eternal truths on which the Church is based (Acts i. 21, 22), and thus to lay the foundation of the Church, and be themselves, as it were, part of the first course of the erection (1 Cor. iii. 10, 11), in conjunction with the other specially inspired members of the Pentecostal Church (Eph. ii. 21, 22) ; (2) to **institute offices**, and appoint the first officers in the Church (Acts vi. 1, etc.) ; and also to lay down the rules of Church-life, and to indicate and illustrate the **principles** of Church government for all future ages ; and thus to exercise a permanent legislative function in the Church. At the beginning, for a short time, the Apostles were the only officers in the Church.

**Have the Apostles any successors?**

No ; by the very nature of their office they could not have ; an Apostle being an envoy, plenipotentiary, or commissioner. The office of an envoy, commissioner, plenipotentiary, or apostle expires, as a matter of course, with the accomplishment of his commission. No one could bear **witness** to the historical facts on which the Church is based but those who had personally **witnessed** these facts. No one could "lay again the foundation" of the Church when once it was laid ; and "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." Moreover, as the truths which they were authorized and empowered to announce form a complete system of perpetual obligation, and as, through their writings, they still rule the faithful members of the Church, they need no successors ; and any subsequent Apostolate would be a superfluity, an encumbrance, an excrescence, and a usurpation. Hence it is an unquestionable historical fact that they did not appoint any successors in the Apostolate. Nor must it be forgotten that, as the Apostles had

a special commission, so they were armed with special powers, which they did not transmit.

**What, then, is to be said of, and what is to be said to, those Ministers in our time who claim to be successors of the Apostles?**

It is to be said of them that they are the dupes of a gross fiction, which is not only without basis in Scripture or in history, but is contrary to both the one and the other. It is an audacious after-thought resorted to for the purpose of propping up pretensions which cannot bear the touch of truth. What is to be said to these pretenders is, You say you are an Apostle. Make your vaunting true; for our part, we shall be glad to learn of Apostolic men. Show "the signs of an Apostle." Produce your powers.

**What offices did the Apostles institute?**

Two: (1) That of the **Deacon**, and (2) that of the **Elder, Bishop, or Overseer** (Acts vi., xiv. 23, xv. 2, xx. 17, 28; Phil. i. 1, etc.).

**What are the duties of a Deacon?**

(1) These may be gathered from the occasion of the institution of the office. At first the Apostles had the entire control of Church affairs, temporal as well as spiritual. The contributions to the Church funds were "laid at the Apostles' feet" (Acts iv. 37). But this could only last for a short time. "When the number of the disciples was multiplied" (Acts vi. 1), the Apostles found the administration of the temporalities of the Church an unbecoming distraction of their time and thought from their directly spiritual duties, Preaching and Prayer (vers. 2, 4). They, therefore, with the concurrence of the body of the disciples, instituted a new office, and appointed and inducted the first officers, whom the body of the Church had selected (looked out) for the purpose.

(2) A **deacon**, according to the root-meaning and derivation of the term, and its use in the New Testament, is one whose duty it is to supply the wants, and attend to the comfort, of others (Matt. iv. 11, etc.); in fact, "to serve tables" (Acts vi.).

The qualifications indispensable in a Deacon are indicated in Acts vi. and 1 Tim. iii. 8, 9. These qualities are: An unblemished character, intense spirituality, the affection and confidence of the Church (Acts vi. 3), and the absence of that which would be especially perilous in one who had charge of Church funds,—luxurious and expensive habits, or a hazardous eagerness in the acquisition of money (1 Tim. iii. 3-8).

**What was the ground on which the institution of Church offices and the distribution of duties were made in Apostolic times ?**

**Fitness**, or rather the unfitness of any other arrangement. "It is not fit," etc. (Acts vi. 2, R.V.). An office in the primitive Church was the result of a felt Church need, and a recognised gift in certain members for meeting that need.

**Who in the present day hold the corresponding office to that of a New Testament Deacon ?**

The Officers of Finance, who, in some Churches, still bear the same name, but in other Churches are called Stewards.

**What are the Scriptural requisites for the due appointment of Pastors ?**

A striking and significant description of an ordination service to **Church-rulership** is given in Num. xxvii. 15, etc. : "And Moses spake unto the Lord, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient." Here we have the essential elements of ministerial ordination :—(1) **The Divine Call to the office** : "Let the Lord set a man over the congregation." (2) **The nature of the office** — **Leadership is Shepherdship**. (3) **The grand primary qualification for the ministerial office** : "a man in whom is the Spirit." (4) **The mode of induction to the office** : the laying on of hands before all the congregation, and the giving him a charge in their sight. (5) **The correlative duty of the congregation, and the object of all this solemnity of appointment** : "That all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient."

The points to be guarded in Christian ordination are :—(1) The Divine call indicated by grace and gifts which God alone can bestow. (2) The right of the people to approve men admitted into the pastorate. (3) The solemn setting apart to the office of an elected

candidate by those who are Ministers already, after due examination and testing of his fitness by them, and a charge given by the highest officer of the Church, in the sight of the congregation, who are present as the representatives of the people generally, and are bound to be obedient. (4) The devolving of the ministerial office, with a solemn and expressive form, by the present holders of it on men who are to be first sharers in and then successors to that office (2 Tim. ii. 2).

**What are the duties of an Elder, Bishop, or Overseer of the Church ?**

The feeding and the oversight of the other members of the Church. Feeding implies preaching, teaching, and warning ; oversight includes watching and rule (Acts xx. 28 ; 1 Peter v. 2 ; Heb. xiii. 7, 17).

**Who in the present day hold the corresponding position to that of the New Testament Elders or Bishops ?**

The Ministers, or the Pastorate.

**What is the nature of the " rule " assigned to the Pastorate by the New Testament ? And what are the due provisions for the maintenance of rule and order in the Church ?**

Our Lord has given to His Church, in the New Testament, directions amply sufficient for its guidance until His return. Pastoral rule must be : (1) **Real and effective** ; not merely nominal, inasmuch as its correlatives on the part of " the flock " are **obedience and submission** ; and on the part of the pastorate a strict responsibility to God for its exercise. Heb. xiii. 17 : "**Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them ; for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account.**" Christ's Ministers are armed with His authority for the preservation of order, health, and purity in His Church. (2) **Not arbitrary or absolute ; not kingship or lordship ; but spiritual stewardship or house-rule.** The Christian pastor is the **House-father** of his people ; his duty being that of providing, protecting, overseeing, regulating, order-keeping, and taking care that every member of " the household of faith " has, in a spiritual sense, plenty to eat and plenty to do, and attends alike to his meals and to his work. Luke xii. 42 : " Who then is the faithful and wise steward whom his Lord shall set over His household, to give them their portion of food in due season ? " Ministers are entrusted especially with the providing spiritual food for Christ's household during His temporary absence. Luke xxii. 25, 26 : " The

kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them ; and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors. But ye shall not be so." 1 Cor. iv. 1 : "Let a man so account of us as of ministers" (literally, **underrowers, subordinates, i.e.,** men "under authority," namely, that of Christ, having others "under" them, like the centurion in the Gospel), "and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found **faithful.**" **Faithfulness or trustiness** is the correlative of **trust**, and a **steward** is a confidential servant to whom is entrusted the management of a household or estate, and especially the dispensing of food and the allotment of tasks. Col. i. 24, 25, 28 : "The Church, whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation (literally **house-rule**) of God which is given to me for you ; Whom we **preach, warning** every man, and **teaching** every man, in all wisdom ; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." 1 Peter v. 1-3 : "The **elders, therefore,** among you I exhort **tend** the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, **neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you**" (R.V.). A minister of Christ must know how he ought to behave himself in the "**house of God, which is the Church of the living God**" (1 Tim. iii. 15). Christ Himself is "**a great Priest over the house of God**" (Heb. x. 21 ; see also 1 Peter iv. 17).

### What, then, is the extent of a Pastor's authority ?

A Pastor's **rights** must, of course, be co-extensive with his **responsibilities** : the latter are the measure of the former. Moreover, the same Word of God, which gives him his authority, also gives him his instructions ; and these instructions are **not sealed** instructions, but are open, and as it were **posted up**, to be known and read alike by himself and by his charge. His ministry is pre-eminently and prominently the "**Ministry of the Word.**" He has not the slightest authority to impose on the people of his charge any doctrinal beliefs which are not derived from the Word, and provable by it. He has "**not dominion over**" their "**faith**" (2 Cor. i. 24). They are not bound to believe a syllable he says for which he can bring no proof from the document left alike for his guidance and that of the rest of the household. It is not only their right, but their duty also, to test his teaching by the written word. Acts xvii. 11 : "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, **examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.**" All other pastoral authority grows out of the ministry of the Word. Heb. xiii. 7 : "Remember them that

had the rule over you, which spake unto you the Word of God." God's people both may and **must** check his teaching, by the word of God. 2 Cor. iv. 2. Our Lord Himself is the "**House-holder**," the minister is but the **House-steward**. The Church of Rome is compelled to forbid or discourage the reading of the Scriptures by the laity, and to claim for the priesthood the right to put upon them meanings foreign or even adverse to their natural sense, and to elevate dogmas and decrees inconsistent with the Scriptures to a practical supremacy over the Scriptures themselves, because it cannot otherwise cloak its daring usurpations and its arrogant impositions. Such usurpations and impositions vitiate its worship. "Howbeit, in vain do they worship Me, teaching for **doctrines the commandments of men**" (Mark vii. 7). They "**make void the law of God**" that they "**may keep**" their "**own traditions**." The greater part of the corruptions and cruelties of the papacy have grown out of the unscriptural exorbitance of pastoral claims, through the setting at naught of the express limitations which Christ Himself has put upon the power of those whom He has left in charge of His household.

**Does the title "Steward" chosen by our Lord for His Ministers distinguish between pastoral power and any other kind of authority besides that of a monarch?**

It also differentiates it, for instance, from that of a **Viceroy**: "one who governs in place of a king with a delegated regal authority." Christian ministers are distinctly forbidden, through St. Peter himself, to assume the airs of viceroyalty. "The elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, neither as **lording it over** the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter v. 1-3). Here pastoral power is distinctly described as **leadership** in contrast to **lordship**.

No man may assume to be the vicar of Christ, since no man can, without impious presumption, claim to be Christ's substitute, invested for the time being with absolute authority; he is simply a "**steward**," whose business it is to see that His Master's instructions, which are open to all, are carried out by all.

A firm as well as gentle parental or fatherly element must always be recognisable in pastoral rule, as is intimated in 1 Tim. iii. 5: "If a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?" Here, again, ruling and **care-taking** are synonymous. A "**bishop**" must be one that "**ruleth well his own house, having his children in subordination, with all gravity**." Here

subordination with all gravity is made to be the duty alike of children to their parents, and of people to their Pastor.

**Did our Lord leave His Church without any effective means of guarding itself against a gross abuse of pastoral authority?**

He did not. The New Testament teaches that whenever Church authorities command what God forbids, or forbid what God commands, they are to be promptly and resolutely disobeyed. And whenever they preach doctrines contrary to the Gospel, they are to be, not deferred to, but denounced, as saith St. Paul: "Though we or an angel from heaven preach unto you any other Gospel, let him be accursed." Moreover, the flock of Christ are expressly warned against Bishops or Pastors "teaching perverse things." It was not a "naughty," but a "noble" habit of the Berean hearers to carefully and continuously check by Scripture even the Apostles' teaching.

**You have not spoken of the priestly functions of the Christian Ministry. Why?**

Because the name **Priest** is never applied in the New Testament to ministers distinctively. We read there, indeed, of false heathen priests, of the Jewish priesthood, which is said to be abolished, being superseded, not by an order of Christian priests, but by the Priesthood of Jesus Christ (Heb. vii.—x.); and of the priesthood which is common to all believers, but not the special prerogative of the Ministry (1 Peter ii. 9).

**Were the spiritual and the financial affairs of the Church and the functions of Church-officers sharply and rigidly separated, so that Apostles and Elders had nothing to do with finance, and the Deacon no share in spiritual ministrations?**

Certainly not. The first Deacons exercised whatever spiritual, evangelistic, and apologetic gifts they might have received from the Head of the Church; and St. Paul, along with private members of the Church, took charge of the collections for the poor believers in Jerusalem. The financial arrangements of the Apostolic Church prove that there ought to be officers of finance distinct from officers of oversight and teaching; but in the administration of funds raised by the Churches generally, it is expedient that Pastors and laymen should be associated, in order to preclude either suspicion or temptation.

**Is, then, every Church-office, Church-usage, Church-arrangement which has not the express sanction of New Testament precept or precedent to be regarded as unwarrantable? Since Christ has left such clear instructions to all His servants, has the Church, or any local Church, or voluntary connexion of Churches, no legislative rights whatever?**

Neither the Church in general, nor any particular Church, or association or connexion of Churches, can have any right to make, or any excuse for making, any law at variance with "the law of Christ;" but, so long as it keeps within the limits of Christ's own supreme legislation, every Church, or voluntary association, or connexion of Churches, is at perfect liberty to make its own bye-laws, regulations, and arrangements. Hence councils, synods, convocations, conferences, do not legislate for Christ's Church in general, but regulate and administer for those branches or portions of the Church with which they are personally associated.

**What is "the first and great" duty of a Christian Minister?**

To "preach the Word." Like the Apostles, he must give himself "to prayer and the ministry of the Word." He must "labour in the Word and doctrine," by unwearied study, and most energetic exposition and enforcement of the same. He must "study to approve himself to God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." Christianity began with preaching. The Church began with praying; its next step was preaching. The Christian minister is no more a mere lecturer or rhetorician or philosopher than he is a priest.

**Has no one else a right to preach but a separated Minister?**

Every one to whom Christ has entrusted the preaching gift not only has the right, but is under obligation to use that gift, on all fitting occasions. But it is quite possible that a man has fancied that he possessed this gift, who was nevertheless conspicuously without it. The Church must be the judge of his fitness. No man can have a right to thrust aside another preacher, and thrust himself into his place. In Church assemblies "all things" must "be done decently and in order." George Fox, for example, was grossly in the wrong when he went about disturbing congregations, and interrupting worship, and trying to silence and supersede the regularly appointed preacher. But the humble, orderly exercise of a gift is not the usurpation or invasion of an office. It is clear that, in the primitive

Church, preaching was not confined to the ordained pastorate, any more than was "prayer," to which, as well as "the ministry of the Word," the Apostles gave themselves (Acts vi. 4).

### **What is meant by preaching ?**

The root-idea of preaching in the Bible is, **proclaiming, heralding, bringing good tidings.** This is shown alike by the original meaning of the word and by its primitive use. "Warning" and "teaching" are its sequels or accompaniments. Yet preaching, delivering such tidings as the Gospel-preacher brings, is most "glorious" teaching. But there must be a further graduated teaching of disciples. This is involved in the very idea of discipleship. "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect (sufficiently advanced) even the hidden wisdom." "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection."

### **With whom rests the responsibility of recognising the fitness of a member of the Church for the Pastoral Office ?**

This recognition must be the joint act of pastors and people, and thus be the act of the whole Church. We have seen from the New Testament that the **initiative** and the **authorizing appointment**, the first and the last step, belong to the **pastorate**. The Apostles **appointed** as Deacons those whom the people had approved (Acts vi.). In like manner the setting apart of any one to be an elder, bishop, pastor, or presbyter was, appropriately, "by laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

### **Is it any degradation to the members of a Church to "obey" and "submit themselves in the Lord" to their Pastors ?**

Not unless it be a degradation to a Christian to "obey" and "submit" himself to the declared and recorded will of the Head of the Church Himself. Ministers are, in very deed, the "servants" of the Church, yet not its "servants to command," but their "servants for Christ's sake": the pastor is "over" them "in the Lord," and, therefore, **under** the Lord. His fellow-servants may only call him to account, or refuse submission when, and, in so far as, he sets at nought or goes beyond the instructions of the common Master which are open to them all, or is himself the violator of the arrangements constitutionally established in the Church. If a Pastor be proved guilty of unscriptural teaching, unchristian habits or incorrigible negligence, then it becomes the Church's duty to call him to account in the like regular and con-

stitutional way to that in which he was inducted into office. by means of some duly constituted Church-court; or if he betray incurable and harmful incapacity for the efficient discharge of the duties of his office, then the Church is bound with all gentleness, tenderness, and consideration to make other provision for the fulfilment of those solemn duties.

**It seems plain, then, that the Christian Pastor has a definite status and authority in the Church?**

Certainly. How can a man be the overseer of others unless he be "over" those whom he is set to oversee? But it must be remembered that his oversight is for definite purposes and under definite conditions. The duties of a spiritual shepherd are set forth at large in both Testaments, and his authority is the necessary outgrowth of his duties. But he must never allow himself or his charge to forget that he is God's mouthpiece, not theirs.

**Have all Pastors, then, the same kind of work?**

Not necessarily, since they have not all the same gifts. There may be, according to the needs of the Church, and the discretion of the pastorate, a distribution of service and division of labour, answering to the diversity of gifts. But the providing for the instruction and edification of the Church and the maintenance of order in it are distinctly assigned to the pastorate by the Head of the Church Himself and His Apostles. It should be the anxiety, as it is the obligation, of each pastor to "rule well," as well as to "labour in the Word and doctrine." And how can a man rule well, who is not allowed to rule at all?

**It seems clear, then, that a Pastor is not meant to be the mere organ of his congregation?**

Most assuredly; his responsibility to the Master will not allow him to be that.

**Are Pastors themselves members of the Church?**

Yes. They are distinguished in the Church, but not distinct from it. The claims set up by the High Church ecclesiastics to be the sole consignees and channels of Divine grace, and its only dispensers, by their priestly officiations, is a daring usurpation, and an intolerable intrusion between believers and their Head, which it behoves God's free children to repel with indignation. These pretensions are not

merely unsustained by the New Testament, but are forbidden, and were distinctly disclaimed by the Apostles themselves, and are rendered all the more blameworthy by contrast with the words and the bearing of the very Apostles whose successors they still claim to be.

Moreover, we have seen that the pastorate has no monopoly of either spiritual gifts or spiritual work.

Clearly not of spiritual gifts, either in the first or the nineteenth century of our era. And if not of gifts, then in all good conscience, not of work. Every member of the Church is bound to "occupy"—**make the most of**—whatever talent or talents the Master has entrusted to him. And the Church is bound to utilise the gift or gifts of every one of its members. It is an essential part of the duty of the pastorate to **set a-going**, and to **keep a-going**, and to direct the working power of each member of the Church; to **regulate**, but not to **restrain**, or even **restrict** that power, except so far as is necessary to prevent the workers from being in each other's way, and hindering or undoing each other's work. Hence Stephen, one of the seven, had and exercised, with signal power, various spiritual gifts; and Philip preached the Gospel to the Samaritans and to the Ethiopian treasurer, and to many others.

It is marvellous how the suppression or neglect of the mutual ministry in our Churches has blinded English expositors to the true meaning and even the true rendering of Eph. iv. 12, which states one chief object of the institution of pastors, teachers, etc., to be, "for the full fitting of the saints for work of service, for the building up of the body of Christ." Almost every great German interpreter so renders the passage, following Erasmus. A great critic thus gives the meaning of the passage: "For the qualifying of believers that they may themselves labour for the edification of the Church." Another explains it: "To make the individual Christians, jointly and severally, meet for co-operating for the furtherance of the Church."

On this point St. Peter, too, is most explicit: "According as each hath received a gift, **ministering it among yourselves**, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speaketh," etc. (1 Peter iv. 9-11).

We have also seen what a wide diffusion of gifts, and what a diversity of agencies existed in the primitive Church.

A very large and essential element of Church-life and Church-duty is the mutual ministry of the various members of the Church. The members of the Church are described in the New Testament as

mutually complementary and mutually necessary. Church members are not only members of the Church, they are "members one of another." This mutual membership involves mutual ministry. There is no element of Church-life more largely or more strikingly set forth in Scripture than this is. And yet, strange to say, there has been none so much neglected by the Church for more than a thousand years ; and that to its incalculable loss and harm.

**How is this neglect to be accounted for ?**

It was the lamentable result of the growth of priestly power in the Church, on the one hand ; and, on the other, of that indiscriminate inclusiveness which followed the intermeddling with Church affairs by the State. But a revival of true vital godliness is invariably accompanied and betokened by a revival of the primitive instinct of fellowship, which is, indeed, one of the strongest instincts of the new nature. Conversely, a growing distaste for Christian fellowship in any Church is a sure symptom of declining spirituality. The absence of provision for Christian fellowship in a Church is deplored by all men of spirituality and insight.

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CHAPTER III.

PRIVILEGED CHURCH MEETINGS AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

**What privileged meetings has the Church of Christ ?**

It has (1) the Lord's Supper ; (2) meetings for confidential intercourse amongst the members themselves, for taking "sweet counsel together ;" and (3) meetings for the regulation and administration of its own affairs, and for the carrying out of its discipline. In the early ages of the Church's history, the first two were combined ; the Lord's Supper and the Lovefeast, which it will be necessary to consider separately, formed one continuous solemnity. But the Lovefeast was gradually pushed out by the encroachments of the ritualistic and the sacerdotal elements. In the beginning regular confidential intercourse among the members of the Church constituted the second of the four great elements of Church-life. These were (a) "the teaching of the Apostles ;" (b) "the Fellowship ;" (c) "the Breaking of Bread ;" and (d) "the Prayers" (Acts ii. 42). The decline of Fellowship and the

decline of Discipline proceeded at an equal pace. The Lord's Supper and Baptism require separate and more lengthened consideration.

**How does it appear that the Church has the right of excluding unruly, disreputable, or morally and spiritually infectious members?**

This question includes the whole subject of Church discipline. That the Church is constituted by Christ the guardian of its own purity and peace is plain from Christ's own words, which constitute the **charter of the Church's incorporation** :

"If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, **tell it unto the Church**; but **if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man** and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 15-20).

Here our Lord plainly speaks of His Church as a distinct community; with privileged meetings for prayer and for authoritative and effective discipline over its own members, and for the preservation of peace among them. This He had previously named, as belonging peculiarly to Himself, "**My Church**." And here He guarantees that their disciplinary decisions shall be sanctioned and their united prayers answered by God Himself, and engages to be personally present at all their meetings, whether for prayer or discipline. Hence His disciples, so soon as His animating, guiding, and empowering Spirit, Whom He promised to send, made His presence felt amongst them, did duteously form themselves into a distinct society, appropriating to it the name which Christ had chosen for it, "**the Church**" (Acts *passim*), admitting new members into it by Baptism, the rite which He had appointed. And effective Church-discipline was at once instituted, as appears from the awful instance of Ananias and Sapphira.

**How, then, is Church discipline to be carried out? Have individual Church members any disciplinary rights and duties?**

They clearly have the right and the duty of remonstrance and reproof, first singly, and then by two or three (Matt. xviii. 16); Christ Himself engaging to be present at all such interviews. The Old Testament in-

junction : "Thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, and shalt not suffer sin upon him" (Lev. xix. 7), is binding on the Christian Church. Private members of the Church have still further the right and duty of disowning and declining any intimate intercourse with any one who refuses to submit to the judgment of the Church. This duty is strongly insisted on by St. Paul : "Now we **command** you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye **withdraw yourselves** from every brother that walketh disorderly," etc. "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him," etc. (2 Thess. iii. 6, 14).

According to our Lord's own words, the right and duty of discipline, of guarding and vindicating its own peace and purity, belongs to "**the Church**;" in like manner St. Paul appeals to "the Church of Corinth" to "purge out" and "put away from among them that wicked person." The **mode** in which Church action is to be taken is not indicated in the disciplinary directions of either our Lord or His Apostle. This is one of those powers left to the discretion of the Church itself. The Church must do it by the most solemn, safe, dignified, impressive, and effective mode of procedure possible. Only it is the special ultimate responsibility of the pastorate to see that it is done, with due deliberation and in a constitutional manner. Our Lord, in His epistles to the Seven Churches, holds the Angel of each Church, its spokesman and chief ruler, directly responsible for seeing discipline effectively carried out against false teachers and bad livers. But the solemn act of dismembering an incorrigible member of the Church is the act of the Church, through its duly constituted courts and officers. Thus, though the judgment be pronounced by "two or three gathered together in Christ's name, "this punishment" is "inflicted by the many" (2 Cor. ii. 6). "What have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not **ye judge them that are within?**" (1 Cor. v. 12).

That the Church is not so much **at liberty** as **bound** to use its conscientious common sense in its mode of carrying out our Lord's disciplinary directions is all the more apparent from the fact that the reader, most of all the expositor, is bound to use his conscientious good sense in the interpretation of them. That **some numerical limitation must** be given to the word "the many" is plain.

**Does it not appear from these passages that each local society of Christians, under one and the same government, is a Church, and for disciplinary purposes the Church?**

Clearly, since the injunction, "Tell it to the Church," must, **at**

least in the first instance, refer to the local Church to which the offender and the aggrieved parties both belong. It were absurd to suppose that an Œcumenical Council, much less the whole body of enrolled Church members throughout the world, must be called together to compose every obstinate misunderstanding amongst Church members in whatever place it may occur. But this by no means precludes appeals to higher authorities, to which matters may be referred which a local Church finds itself unable to set at rest.

### **Is there any New Testament precedent for such an Appeal?**

A most signal and conclusive one: the council held at Jerusalem described in Acts xv. In this case a local Church, that of Antioch, agreed to refer unconditionally a disputed matter which was agitating the community to "the Apostles and Elders" at Jerusalem. This procedure was natural and obvious, particularly as the question in dispute had relations affecting most other Churches as well as that at Antioch. The result of the appeal and the decision was most happy. "They rejoiced for the consolation" (ver. 31). This shows the extreme and obvious utility and desirableness of an appellate Church-court, raised above all local partisanships, to which may be referred all matters which the local Church finds itself unable to settle in a peaceful and satisfactory manner, especially questions which are likely to occur in other Churches too. It was the conspicuous and urgent need of such a Court which made way for the usurpations of the Church of Rome; which, had such a Court, properly and equitably constituted, been agreed to by the Churches, could never have been submitted to.

### **To what extent is the regulative and disciplinary action of any Church-court valid in the sight of God, and rendered effective by the ever-present Head Himself?**

To the same extent that the prayers of any gathering of believing brethren are availing—namely, so far as they do not clash with our Lord's own revealed will.

### **Is there any limit to the obligation of personal acquiescence in the decisions of Church-courts?**

None whatever, except that indicated in our last answer. A believer is bound to acquiesce in the decision of the duly constituted authorities of the Church to which he belongs, unless that decision be found to clash with the revealed will of the Master Himself.

**Is there any further force in our Lord's disciplinary direction in Matt. xviii. : "Tell it unto the Church," etc. ?**

It clearly implies that the act of a duly constituted Church-court, though it should only consist of "two or three," "wherever gathered together in His name," is to all spiritual intents and purposes the act of the Church itself ; and if performed in dutiful accordance with the Master's own published instructions, being done **in His name**, and under His authority and direction, it is done in His personal presence and under His personal presidency. It is the act of Christ Himself. That solemn local act "on earth" is forthwith followed by an awful act in the Highest Heaven. It is not only registered, but "**bound**" or "loosed in Heaven."

**What should be the characteristics of Church-discipline ?**

These, as clearly set forth in the New Testament, are : Fidelity, **tenderness**, and continuous regard for the excluded member with a view to his restoration. Until his repentance he is to be "as a heathen man and a publican ;" that is to say, an object of yearning pity and the subject of earnest prayer, longing desire, and strenuous, thoughtful effort for his salvation, but not of confidential intercourse. In this respect a broader, deeper line of demarcation is to be drawn between the loyal Church-member and the incorrigible and impenitent backslider, than between the Christian and a heathen : "With such a one no not to eat" (1 Cor. v. 11), least of all, surely, at the Table of the Lord.\* In the case of private faultiness, the faithful endeavour to correct privately must precede Church action (Matt. xviii.).

**Are errors of doctrine proper subjects of Church-discipline ?**

Yes, if they go so far as to touch the vital and essential truths of the Gospel : "If there be **anything that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to**" the "trust" of the Church, and especially of its "overseers" (1 Tim. i. 10, 11). The solemn charge to the Christian minister is : "**Hold fast the form of sound words** . . . in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. **That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us**"

\* It is an admonitory instance of the violent warping of Church principles to Church usage, that the fine expositor, Godet, maintains that the Church has no right to exclude from the Lord's Supper even one whom it would be wicked to eat with elsewhere.

(2 Tim. i. 13, 14). "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things" (iv. 3-5). "A bishop must be . . . holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught," etc. (Titus i. 9, ii. 1, 8). "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine, . . . sound speech that cannot be condemned ; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed" (ii. 1, 8). "To the angel of the Church in Pergamos, write : I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam . . . So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent." "Unto the angel of the Church in Thyatira, write : These things saith the Son of God, Who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, . . . I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach," etc. (Rev. ii. 14, 15, 16, 18, 20).

**What is the object of every act of Church discipline with regard to the censured or excluded individual ?**

"That the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." 1 Cor. v. 4, 5 : "Ye and my spirit being gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus" (a clear, strong echo of Matt. xviii.), to deliver with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ such an one unto Satan . . . that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

**Is the Church-meeting infallible in its censures and sentences ?**

It is not infallible, inasmuch as it is not impeccable. The dogma of the infallibility of the pope is historically ridiculous.

**In what sense do we "believe in the holy Catholic Church" ?**

The holiness of the Church, like that of the individual believer, is, in the first place, a holiness of relation to God, a holiness of privilege, of obligation, of initial and progressive realisation, and of promised perfection, on the condition of faithfulness, watchfulness, and earnestness. The principle, *Vigilantibus, non dormientibus* (To the watching, not to the negligent) expressly applies both to the Church and to the individual believer. When God said to the Old Testament Church, "Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God," He was far from pronouncing them to be in, as yet, a state of entire sanctification.

Since, then, the Head of the Church has provided for the preservation of peace and purity in His Church, have the peace and purity of the Church been inviolate from the beginning ?

Far from it. The very fact that so much care was taken to secure that peace and purity implies the existence of mental, moral, and spiritual imperfections to be guarded against. Our blessed Lord, in foretelling and authorizing His Church, assumed that some of its members would be faulty. Hence He enjoined firm and faithful whilst tender and patient discipline, and gave His Church the right of excluding the incorrigible. Besides, it is plain, from the Acts, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse, that the Apostolic Church was, as yet, far from perfection. Even Peter, on one occasion, "was to be blamed," and "even Barnabas was led away by dissimulation" (Gal. ii.). On a mission tour "the contention was so sharp between" Barnabas and Paul on a question of administration, that they "parted asunder, the one from the other." And the Epistles and the Revelation both enjoin and exemplify tolerance of an imperfection which stops short of contagious moral evil or fundamental doctrinal error ; and the restoration by the "spiritual" of any one who is "overtaken in a fault," the bearing of "each other's burdens," of spiritual imperfection, and the frank confession of "faults one to another," and prayer "one for another," with a view to healing and help.

Since, then, the Church is a voluntary Society with definite terms of admission, how say some that every human being is born a member of the Church ?

That statement is not only without Scripture warrant, but is in direct contradiction of Scripture, and made to suit a system of doctrine of men's own devising. Every man, indeed, is born with a right of admission to the Church on fulfilment of the divinely prescribed conditions ; but on no other ground. That the Church is a Society in contrast with the world which it "came out from among," is affirmed in the New Testament in the most distinct and solemn terms. This truth, in fact, so pervades the New Testament, that it is impossible to make sense of it on any other supposition. No one who fulfils the divinely-prescribed conditions may be refused admission ; since it is the duty of every one who resolves to be Christ's disciple to join His Church.

**Can a disbeliever in the Godhead and the redeeming death of Christ be a member of His Church ?**

Clearly not ; for the Church is "the flock of God which He has

**purchased with His own blood** " (Acts xx. 28). Besides, all Christ's disciples are, by His command, to be baptized "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The central solemnity of the Church—the Lord's Supper—cannot but have a totally different meaning to one who believes and to one who disbelieves the Godhead and redeeming death of Christ.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE VISIBILITY, CONTINUITY, AND PERMANENCE OF THE CHURCH.

#### Is the Church of Christ visible or invisible ?

It is both. Being, as we have seen, a society of human beings, existing in the world, with a grand work to accomplish, in all lands and ages, and amongst all men, with an organization and regularly appointed officers, with well-known places of meeting, it cannot but be a very conspicuous fact, and a very powerful factor, in history and human life. In this view the Church is the aggregate of the Churches, the various Christian Societies—"All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. i. 2).

It is instructive to note, however, that the verbal distinction between the Visible and the Invisible Church does not appear in Christian literature until after Christianity became the religion of the State, in the fourth century of our era ; and that it is emphatically re-affirmed by every great reformer, as by Wycliffe and the writers of the Reformation.

It is impossible, in the light of the New Testament, to regard the entire professing Church as numerically and absolutely identical with the Body of Christ. The true Church may indeed, with all its lovely contrast to the world, still be not yet without "spot or wrinkle or any such thing." It includes not only much ignorance, mistake, imperfection, and weakness, but also lukewarmness and carnality. But the Roman Catholic and High Anglican theory that the visibility and continuity of the Church consists in a hierarchical succession and sacramental performance is repugnant to the New Testament representation of the Church. The invisible Church of true believers must ever be the nucleus and kernel of the visible Church. Every member of a Church has a "name to live," but Christ is not the Bridegroom

“of the dead, but of the living.” A **totally** corrupt and apostate community is not a visible **Church**, but a visible **cheat**. It is the clear and inevitable duty of every office-bearer, and of every private member of a Church, to do his utmost to bring the Church as near as possible to the New Testament model.

**Can any one be a faithful disciple of Christ who does not join the Church of Christ in one or other of its local or denominational branches ?**

No one can read the New Testament without perceiving that it is the will of the Divine Founder and Head of the Church that every one of His disciples should be connected with it, and should “forsake not” its “assemblings together” for worship and mutual edification, and should conform to its disciplinary regulations, so far as they do not clash with the word of God.

**Since membership in the Church is obligatory on every one who owns the authority of Christ, how can the Church be a purely voluntary Society ?**

There is no real contradiction between the two categories **obligatory** and **voluntary**, in the moral and spiritual sphere. For, in that sphere, the obligation not only extends to and includes the will, but **begins** with the will. Every act of dutiful obedience to God is both obligatory and voluntary. The **obligation** is to **will** to do it, and to **do it with a will**. The voluntariness of Church membership is not, in the slightest degree, opposed to **obligatoriness on the conscience**, but to **enforcement from without**. It is the self-humouring unwillingness to join the Church of Christ which is the root of the evil. Whosoever does not, like Saul of Tarsus, on his conversion, “essay to join himself to the disciples,” either lacks or does violence to the instincts of the new nature.

**Is it the will of God that His Church should be permanent ?**

It is ; it is also His **purpose**, and His **promise** : “I will build My Church, and the **gates of hell shall not prevail against it**” (Matt. xvi. 18). “Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the **Church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen**” (Eph. iii. 20, 21). The purposes for which the Church was founded can never be out of date till Christ has presented it “to

Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27).

**In what, then, does the permanence and historical continuity of the Church consist?**

Not, as the low "**High Church**" hypothesis would have it, in the unbroken succession of regularly appointed bishops, however gross and glaring may have been their mental or their moral unfitness for the office, or their unfaithfulness in its discharge; still less, if possible, in the unbroken continuity of an office which had no existence in the earliest ages of the Church—that of **diocesan** episcopacy—but in the continuity of spiritual life growing out of faith in the word. Hence our Lord, in His High Priestly prayer for His Church through all ages, says: "Neither pray I for these alone, but **for them also that shall believe on Me, through their word**" (John xvii. 20). The continuity of the Church is its continuity of faith and fellowship, and holy living and dying. The continuity of the Church must not be sought for in the long, rusty, complicated chain of the unbelieving or misbelieving, worldly or wicked bishops,—a chain which often held in vile durance Christ's free children, and imprisoned the truth in unrighteousness;—not in this, but in the unbroken living stream of Christ's believing people. These have often been "a remnant" against which the hierarchy have "made war," endeavouring "to wear out the saints of the Most High." The continuity and indestructibility of the Church is like, and along with, that of the Priesthood of its living, ever-present Head, "not according to the law of a **carnal commandment**, but according to the **power of an endless life.**"

**Is the form of Church-government of secondary importance?**

It cannot but be of secondary importance to the **objects** for which the Church itself exists: the development and perfecting of Church-life, the actual effectiveness of Church-discipline, and the actual accomplishment of Church-work. It is the clear duty of a Church to use the best means possible for nourishing and sheltering the spiritual life of its members; to carry out Church discipline in the most effective, orderly, and convenient manner, and to carry on the Church's mission of evangelization, education, edification, and philanthropy, by means of all the agencies and appliances which Providence and Grace supply. Hence, the hierarchical claim of lordship on the part of the clergy over God's heritage is condemned as much by history as by Scripture; it is as bad in its actual working

as it is anti-scriptural in theory. The Congregationalist claim, again, that Church discipline cannot be legitimately carried out except in a concourse of the entire body of Church members, is as contrary to the practical experience of communities and societies in general as it is unsupported by the tenor of New Testament teaching. In the most popular constitution, the act of the town council is, to all practical intents and purposes, the act of the inhabitants; and an Act of Parliament, Congress, or the Chambers is the act of the nation. In like manner, the meeting of "the princes" and "elders" was, in the Old Testament, the meeting of "the whole congregation," and the man who took his trial before the regularly appointed judges was said to "stand before the congregation in judgment" (Num. xxxv. 12, 24). The analogy of the synagogue is the same.

**To what extent, then, has every Christian Church, or voluntary connexion of Churches, the right to make its own regulations and arrangements ?**

To the fullest extent, so long as it keeps within the limits of Christ's own legislation, and keeps in view, with a single eye, the purposes for which His Church was founded. The Deed of the Divine Founder is the constitution of every scripturally-organised Christian Church. "The order and form" of worship, of administering the Sacraments, and of solemnizing Christian marriage and Christian burial; arrangements for securing real Christian fellowship and mutual ministration, and for utilizing to the full the gifts and graces of each individual member; liturgies, hymnals, musical instruments, clerical costume, etc., etc., are purely matters of discretionary Church arrangement. But no Church can be at liberty to neglect anything which the Founder and living Head of the Church has expressly enjoined: to abolish public worship, for example; to discard baptism, which He Himself connected with discipleship "even unto the end of the world,"—or the Lord's Supper, which the Lord enjoined His followers to celebrate "oft till He come;" to abolish the Christian pastorate, or to reduce it from "having the rule" to being ruled; to make no distinct or effective provision for Christian fellowship or mutual ministration; to proscribe singing in Christian assemblies; or to absolutely enjoin or absolutely forbid a liturgical service.

**Are there any other divinely-appointed institutions of the Church ?**

We have mentioned baptism, preaching and teaching, pastoral

oversight and rule, fellowship, including, first of all, the Communion of Christ's Body and Blood, united worship, mutual edification, confession of faults and intercession, and effective discipline. We must not omit, besides these, the public reading of the word of God, and the observance of the Lord's Day.

### **Where is the authority for the public reading of the Scriptures ?**

In 1 Tim. iv. 13, 14 St. Paul gives to Timothy, his delegate, the following direction : " Give attention to the reading, the exhortation, and the teaching. Do not neglect the grace-gift that is in thee." That by " the reading " there enjoined is meant a part of regular Church-service is clear from its close connection with " the exhortation and the teaching." The reading of the Law and the Prophets as an integral part of the public service of the synagogue, in conjunction with exhortation and teaching, is repeatedly mentioned in the New Testament, *e.g.*, Luke iv. 15, 16 ; Acts xiii. 15 ; 2 Cor. iii. 14. This ancient and most useful usage was naturally adopted by the Christian Church. The public reading of the Scriptures, in an intelligent, feeling, unobtrusively effective and edifying manner is a grace-gift to be **coveted earnestly** and cultivated carefully.

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## **CHAPTER V.**

### **THE NOTES OF THE TRUE CHURCH.**

#### **What are " the Notes " of the true Church, or of a true Church ?**

The **notes** of the true Church, or of a true Church, are essentially the same as the **notes** of a true Christian ; and are, therefore, very simple, and " are known and read of all men." As a believer may be a true believer although as yet very far from perfection, so may a Church be a true Church whilst plainly an imperfect Church. But no Society can, without setting at nought the authority of Christ and His Apostles, claim to be a true Church, in the absence of the following elements, involved in the principles already ascertained : (1) The acknowledgment by its members of the absolute authority of Christ as the Divine Founder and Head of the Church. (2) Stated assemblies for worship and discipline (*Matt. xviii.*) (3) The observance of the

terms of admission to the Church laid down by Christ and His Apostles. (4) A regular system of pastoral instruction and oversight. (5) Without a more or less regular and recognised system of mutual edification, no Church can pretend to answer the New Testament pattern as a self-building organism. But we may not unchurch any Christian community which has the four above-named marks, even although it has allowed the fifth to fall into disuse. The "Notes" which the Roman Catholic Church has invented are certainly not to be found in itself.

We have seen two very intelligible distinctions with regard to the Church: (1) Between the Church as Visible and the Church as Invisible; (2) Between local Churches and the Church Universal. Is there any other distinction which it may be convenient to make?

There is one other distinction which it is well to make in the present state of Christ's Church militant: that between a Denominational Church and the All-inclusive Church. As the Church Universal is the aggregate of all local Churches, so the only Catholic Church which is not a contradiction in terms is the sum total of all the various denominational Churches. This is "the holy Church throughout all the world" of the Te Deum, and "the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth" of the Communion Service. The Invisible Church is the total number of true believers in heaven and on earth. This is "the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints," of "the Apostles' Creed." This is an Article of **Belief**. Every local Christian Society of every Christian denomination, having the marks or "notes" just now indicated, is a Church of Christ, as described in Christ's own Charter of Incorporation, given in Matt. xviii., whether that Church be in Jerusalem, Rome, New York, London, Little Eaton, or Uganda.

You have shown clearly that the Church of Christ, according to Christ's own idea of it, is the Society or Brotherhood which He Himself founded; and have also shown that it has the characteristics belonging to such Society or Brotherhood. But there are several points on which further instruction from Holy Writ is desirable. And, first, I wish to know something more definite about the rite of admission into the Church.

## CHAPTER VI.

## CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

**What is the intent and meaning of Christian Baptism ?**

Baptism, according to our Lord's own intent and meaning, as stated in the New Testament, is the rite of admission into the number of Christ's avowed and recognised disciples, and into the privileges and responsibilities of discipleship.

**What is your authority for this affirmation ?**

Our Lord's own express words at the institution of the rite : "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth : Go ye, therefore, and **make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them,**" etc. (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19). Baptism, then, by the very terms of the Church's original commission from her Lord, is distinctly and indissolubly connected with the making disciples, and teaching those who are already made. The disconnecting of baptism from discipleship and teaching is, therefore, a direct disregard of the Master's own express intention in instituting the rite. To baptize and take no further Church cognizance of the baptized is either to wrong this solemn institution of the Risen Lord, by depriving it of the meaning which He assigned to it, or to divert it, unwarrantably and dangerously, from the purpose and significance which He, in the clearest terms, attached to it, "even to the end of the world," and to substitute a meaning to match one's own theories and tastes. This no disciple of Christ should dare or be allowed to do.

**Why did not our Lord explain to His disciples, with more detailed explicitness, the meaning of Baptism, and His reason for choosing it as the rite of admission to recognised and responsible discipleship ?**

For the like reason that He spoke of His "Church" without stopping to define the term. His disciples were perfectly familiar with the word, and could have no doubt as to the intention of the rite, and its suitability to its purpose.

**How had they become familiar with the term and with the intention of the rite ?**

The answer is not far to seek. When our Lord, after His own

baptism by John, went forth to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, and to gather a following of disciples, the first little band of disciples baptized, under His eye, all who joined their company, this being the formal, public declaration of their discipleship.

And, earlier still, His forerunner, John, had "come baptizing with water" those who enrolled themselves as his disciples. And even before that time, baptism was a rite well known in the Old Testament Church. "The doctrine of baptisms" was a well-understood element of Jewish theology, and "divers washings" formed a striking part of the Jewish ritual. In the Old Testament Church baptism was the sign of a changed position in relation to "the congregation of the Lord,"—"the Church in the wilderness" or in the "Holy Land;" a change from a state of separation on account of ceremonial uncleanness to ceremonial cleanness, restoring the right of free access to worship in the tabernacle or the temple, and to all the fellowships of the people of God. And in the extant Jewish literature of the time when our Lord instituted Baptism as the rite of admission to discipleship (see Josephus and Philo), baptism means the removal of a disqualification for attending public worship, by "sprinkling the unclean" with spring-water mixed with "the ashes of an heifer" (Heb. ix. 13), which sanctified "to the purifying of the flesh," the flesh which had been ceremonially contaminated by contact with "a dead body." After seven days' separation, the defiled might again join heartily in the services of religion. The significance of baptism, then, to the Jews of our Lord's day was: re-admission to the lost fellowship of the people of God. By submitting to "John's baptism," "the baptism of repentance," John's converts admitted their estrangement from God, and their forfeiture of fellowship with Him. They, therefore, "were baptized, confessing their sins." Christian baptism was consequently so easily understood, and so incapable of misapprehension, that explanation would have been superfluous. Baptism could have no meaning at that time but admission into fellowship with God and with the people of God, on the basis of discipleship to Christ, and in order to receiving instruction with regard to Him and to His will. The institution of a new baptism, on the part of John the Baptist and our Lord and His disciples, was felt by the Jews to imply a claim to inaugurate a new era in the history of God's kingdom. This is the force of the question in John i. 35, "Why baptizest thou?"

If the Church were not a privileged Society, there would be no need for such a rite. All privileged societies have some such rite or

form of admission or initiation. The admission into a brotherhood of disciples of some one great master, such as Pythagoras, or of the possessors of some supposed to be invaluable secret, as in the case of the Eleusinian Mysteries, by some significant rite, was familiar to the nations in apostolic times. And in almost every case the use of water in one form or other, and to a greater or less degree, was an essential element. Some of these Societies practised immersion, some sprinkling, some both. And introduction to the Society was termed a "new birth." Baptism was the boundary-line, crossing which the baptized entered the new Society, the new community. The great Rabbi Maimonides thus strikingly and beautifully explains the effect and result of the baptism of a heathen proselyte into the Jewish religion : "He will enter the covenant of Israel, come under the wing of the Divine Majesty, and take upon him the yoke of the Law." This involved a great change of relation. A coming "out from among," a being "separate," as well as an admission into a community of which he was not before a member. This fine passage in Maimonides is obviously a recollection of the saying to Ruth the Moabitess, when she had said, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God"—"The God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to trust." This ancient usage of baptizing proselytes is continued by the Jews to this day. And it is still their custom to admit the children with the parents. But it was never supposed to work any moral or spiritual change, there and then, on the passive child. It is regarded as a figurative repetition of the passage of the Red Sea by the Israelites and their little ones, whereby they too "were baptized unto Moses," *i.e.*, came under the legislative authority of Moses, leaving behind that of Pharaoh at once and for ever. Baptism imposes on the baptized a special rule and mode of living. Christian Baptism commits the baptized to the Christian rule and mode of living. The baptized becomes "a debtor to"—is under express obligation to—live a Christian life.

**What is the symbolical significance of Baptism which constitutes its suitability for the purpose of admitting into recognized fellowship with God and with His people, on the basis of Christian discipleship ?**

The symbolical significance of baptism is so simple and natural that "a child can seize on its meaning." It flows from the power of water to take away uncleanness from the "outer man." Before any

special solemnity the people were required to wash themselves. Aaron was washed in water before his indument with his priestly robes. This symbolism had stamped itself on the Hebrew language. David prays: "**Wash** me throughly from mine iniquity, and **cleanse** me from my sin." God promises, through Ezekiel: "I will **sprinkle clean water upon you**, and ye shall be clean, and from all your **filthiness** and from all your idols will I **cleanse** you." Our Lord says to Peter: "If I **wash** thee not, thou hast no part with Me." And when, under the ministry of John the Baptist, the penitent was "baptized of him in Jordan, confessing" his sin, he could not but think of the leprous Syrian, who, trusting in the God of Israel, had "baptized himself,"—the very word used in the Greek version of the Old Testament—and left in that same stream all the clinging scales of his loathsome disease, and came up from the stream with the soft, white, rosy flesh of infancy. The baptized penitent would feel that "Jordan rolled between" him and his forsaken life of godlessness. So simple and so obvious was the symbolic meaning of the rite.

Nor were the Gentiles unfamiliar with the symbolic meaning of sprinkling or immersion. The solemn application of water formed a prominent part of the religious ritual of various nations. A striking instance of the primitive significance of the symbol is given by Frederika Bremer. A tribe of Indians on the Mississippi, on the first day of the year, assemble and plunge into the river, and rise to begin a new life. This ceremony is called the **Bushkiton**. No quarrel is allowed to survive that act. Should any one after that attempt to rake up a former feud, he is at once reminded that the water of the **Bushkiton** has quenched the last spark of animosity. Should any one allude to any unworthy act of any member of the tribe which occurred before the ceremony took place, he is silenced at once by the memento, "He has passed the **Bushkiton**." Every one **reckons himself** "dead indeed unto" all the errors of his past life. He rises from that plunge to "walk in newness of life."

**What is the original meaning of the word Baptize? And what is essential to Baptism?**

The Greek word **baptize** means to **dip** in water, **steep** in water, **wash with** water, or **pour** water over or upon. The word, both in its literary and its colloquial use, had an elastic width of meaning; the idea common to all its meanings, and, therefore, the **essential** idea, is the application of water as the great **cleansing** element. This is at

least equally true of the Hebrew word of which "baptize" is the Greek equivalent and translation. The **quantity** of water applied, or the **precise mode** of its application, is no more of the essence of the rite than the quantity of wine drunk at the Lord's Supper, or the size of the cup out of which it is drunk. In the earliest age of the Church immersion seems to have been the ordinary, but by no means the invariable practice. It is the most impressive form of the rite, and for that reason was the most common; and in the latitude of Palestine, and in the "wilderness of Jordan," was attended by no inconvenience. But whenever, and in so far as, immersion was, on any real consideration, thought inexpedient, immersion was not regarded as of the essence of the rite; but some other mode of the external application of water was looked upon as equally valid. This is plain from the earliest extant Church book, *The Teaching of the Apostles*. There is no trace of a Christian baptistery in the apostolic Churches; indeed the improbability that the three thousand baptized on the day of Pentecost went to the Kedron or the Pool of Siloam to be baptized is extreme. Our Baptist brethren, in denying the validity of any form of Baptism but that by **immersion**, put aside their scholarship with one hand, and sound principles of interpretation with the other. By insisting on this one, rigid, hard and fast meaning of the word, they plunge themselves irrecoverably into exegetic difficulties; for instance, making baptism with fire to be immersion in fire; and the typical baptism "unto Moses" of the children of Israel "in the cloud and in the sea," immersion in the cloud and in the sea; and the **divers** (diverse) baptisms of the Old Testament ritual to have been all of one sort. In the Christian Church there is "one baptism," once for all; but there may be, and were at the very earliest period of which we have any knowledge, diversities of administration. The essential symbolic and ritual element is **water**. "I indeed baptize you with **water**, but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with **fire**." The earliest pictures of Christian Baptism represent it as performed by **pouring**. What the Baptists can fairly claim is, that immersion is the most frequent meaning of the word, and the most expressive and impressive form of the rite. But they are demonstrably in the wrong in saying that it is the only meaning of the word, or is essential to the validity of the rite. To insist upon it in all cases, in all climates, and in all conditions of society subjects them to the rebuke, "Go ye, and learn what that meaneth, I will have **mercy** and not **sacrifice**." It is impossible to translate the word **baptize** by immerse, persistently and consistently, and wherever it occurs. For

example, the Greek version in Dan. iv. 33 represents Nebuchadnezzar as "baptized with the dew." \*

In Mark vii. 4 the Pharisees are said to "baptize couches," literally divans. Now an Oriental divan is a fixture!

It is noteworthy that the Armenians use both immersion and pouring at the same service, apparently from uncertainty as to whether of the two is the proper mode.

That the symbolical meaning of the use of water is retained in sprinkling is equally plain from many passages of Holy Writ.

"Open-communion" Baptists—by far the largest portion of the body—do not maintain the invalidity of Baptism by sprinkling, but only that dipping is the right way.

**Baptism, then, is the initiation into discipleship. Is it also initiation into Church membership?**

Not into full membership in the case of an infant, but into incipient and provisional Church membership. To full Church-membership free personal consent is indispensable. Hence the Western Churches—Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed—treat infant baptism as not implying a right to approach the Table of the Lord, until at Confirmation the baptized personally and consciously and actively takes up the obligations which are inseparable from Christian privilege. The Greek Church, however, forthwith gives the Lord's Supper to the baptized infant.

**Why did our Lord insist upon being baptized by John?**

Because John had received a Divine commission to baptize, and it was the duty, therefore, of all within the range of John's ministry to be baptized by him. The baptism of our Lord forbids any one to decline baptism on high spiritual assumptions.

**What, then, is the symbolical significance of Baptism, which renders it the most appropriate form of admission into the Church of Christ?**

1. The water of Baptism separates the consecrated Society of God's people from "the world which lieth in the wicked one;" "the course

\* The Rev. Charles Stovill, however, one of the very ablest contenders for the absolutely restricted meaning of baptize, "to dip or plunge," valorously attempts this: translating "and were immersed unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea,"—thus making the Apostle contradict the sacred history, which states that they went through the Red Sea "as on dry land" (Heb. xi. 29).

of" which (Eph. ii. 2) is away from God. The baptized, having passed the boundary-line of Baptism (which is not, like the equinoctial line, invisible) has placed Baptism between himself and "the world of the ungodly." His "citizenship" is changed. "The world" into which he was "born" by natural birth, though redeemed and in process of reconciliation, is, nevertheless, as yet "not of the Father" (1 John ii. 16). Hence, the candidate for baptism was required—personally, if an adult; by his sponsors, *i.e.*, his responsible representatives, if an infant—to "renounce the devil and all his works, the lust of the flesh, and all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world." His baptism cut him off from "all that is in the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." This separating significance it could not but have been understood to have, not only by the baptized and the baptizer, but also by the onlooking world. And this effect, as a matter of history, it actually had. It was a rite with a voice intelligible to all—Jews, or Gentiles, or the Church of God.

2. It is strikingly suggestive of repentance, as is indicated by the action of the Israelites recorded in 1 Sam. vii. 6: "They gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord." Hence both by the Baptist and by Peter on the day of Pentecost, baptism and repentance are closely connected: "I baptize you with water unto repentance." "Repent and be baptized."

3. Baptism symbolizes the washing away of sin. This is plainly one of the meanings of Baptism, as St. Peter showed to the penitents on the day of Pentecost: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins;" and by Ananias to Saul of Tarsus: "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." The connection between repentance and remission, as being both symbolised by Baptism, is strikingly put by Strauss: "If on man's part Baptism is the declaration of his renunciation of sin, on God's part it is the declaration of the pardon of sin."

4. Baptism also symbolizes the purification of the affections which was promised through Ezekiel: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart will I give you," etc. Hence the question of baptism was naturally connected in the Jewish mind with that "about purifying" (John iii. 25, 26).

5. Baptism also is associated with a solemn consecration as of a priest to his holy duties, or a victim for immolation on the altar.

This is most impressively seen in our Lord's own language, when, foretelling His sacrificial sufferings, He says : " I have a **baptism** to be **baptized** with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished ! " And, again, in His appeal to the Apostles who were ambitious of distinction in His kingdom : " Are ye able to drink of My cup, and to be **baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized ?** " Here the connection of the " baptism " with " the cup " plainly throws strong light on the meaning and the mutual relation of the two sacraments. It also shows what a solemn, significant, and impressive ceremony Baptism was felt to be.

Thus our baptism is a baptism into Christ's own baptism, being a baptism " into His death " (Rom. vi. 3). It implies an absolute consecration, a decisive and entire devotement.

6. Baptism is, so to speak, the Burial Service of the old nature. " We are **buried with Him by baptism into death** " (Rom. vi. 4). " **Buried with Him in baptism** " (Col. ii. 12).

By baptism it is announced to " all whom it may concern," that all claim, **prestige**, prescription, vested right, of sin over us, has determined, is at an end.

Henceforth, we are not " debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh." Sin, the Flesh, the Old Man, has no more claim over us than had Pharaoh over the Israelites when the returning waters of the Red Sea had flowed over him and all his host. It is thus, too, that baptism is an " antitype " of the Deluge (1 Peter iii. 20). As its down-poured waters flowed between " the world of the ungodly " and the saved family in the ark, shut in by God, so the water of baptism flows between the baptized and " all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

7 And as baptism signifies **Burial**, so it also symbolises **Resurrection** ; not indeed of the buried nature, but of the same individual in a new moral and spiritual nature and relation. " We were buried with Him through the baptism unto death, that, like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also might walk in newness of life " (Rom. vi. 4). " Buried with Him in Baptism, wherein ye are also risen with Christ, through the faith in the operation of God, Who raised Him from the dead " (Col. ii. 12).

8. Another aspect of the significance of Baptism is indicated by St. Paul. " As many of you as were baptized into Christ have **put on Christ** " (Gal. iii. 27).

The baptized believer has not only put on Christ's livery as His servant, and Christ's uniform as His soldier, but he has risen into a

new spiritual personality by living union with Christ, and is thus now standing on a higher plane of being, far above all the distinctions of nation, of culture, of social status, or of sex. From this symbolical significance of Baptism St. Paul points out the violent incongruity between a sinful life and the position and profession of a baptized person, and the solemn and inevitable obligation of the baptized to live a Christian life. St. Paul, in the passages quoted, points out the significance of Baptism, and the grace of which it is the symbol ; this grace accompanying it when "mixed with faith" on the part of the recipient of the rite, having preceded it if faith had anticipated the rite, or following it when faith follows the rite. There is plainly—the New Testament being the standard of appeal—no uniform **chronological** connection between the reception of the rite and the experience of the grace which it sets forth. St. Paul could not possibly mean to contradict, recant, or retract, in the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, what he had so positively said in the fifth, or to withdraw in the twenty-eighth verse of the third chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians what he had said in the twenty-seventh. Baptism is not our **crucifixion** with Christ ; that is accomplished by our own personal faith. It is our **entombment** with Christ ; and that is appropriately done for us by other hands than ours.

An exquisite illustration of this is given by Godet, in his comment on Rom. vi. 4. It proves the simplicity and the vivid aptitude of the figure by its ready and perfect appreciation and appropriation by an unsophisticated and unpreoccupied mind. "The missionary Casilis told us that he was one day questioning a converted Bechuana as to the meaning of a passage analogous (Col. iii. 3). The latter said to him : 'Soon I shall be dead, and they will bury me in my field. My flocks will come to pasture above me. But I shall no longer hear them, and I shall not come forth from my tomb to take them and carry them with me to the sepulchre. They will be as strange to me as I to them. Such is the image of my life in the midst of the world since I believed in Christ.'" As burial breaks the last link that bound a man to the world, so Baptism ends all fellowship with 'the customs and maxims of this wicked world.'"

**Am I to conclude, then, that Baptism does not convey justification or remission of sins, unless it be accompanied by faith ?**

Certainly. Nothing could possibly be more plainly stated than this truth is stated in the New Testament, that we are "justified by faith," and that "faith in Christ's Blood," not in the efficacy of

**Baptism.** The eye of our faith is not directed to the font of baptism, but to the cross of Christ. Our song is "unto Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." The redeemed have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," not in the water of baptism.

When conscious forgiveness accompanies Baptism, it comes as the answer (to use St. Peter's word) to the faith of the baptized in the blood of Christ, not as the effect of the ministration of the baptizer. Thus when Ananias baptized Saul of Tarsus, he did not assume to wash away Saul's sins, but said, "Arise, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord."

**Then I am not to understand that the blessings so simply and fittingly symbolized by Baptism always accompany the performance of the rite?**

Not always. There are two classes of cases in which they do not: (1) those in which the cleansing of the conscience from guilt, and of the affections from impurity, is already realised (Acts x. 48); and (2) those in which Baptism is unaccompanied by faith on the part of the baptized.

**But is it not of the very essence of such a symbolic rite that it should convey that which it symbolizes?**

Certainly not. Circumcision, the rite which admitted into the Old Testament Church, signified the removal of carnality from the heart; but it as certainly neither did this, nor was supposed to do it. This proves that a symbolic rite may be performed before as well as after the reception of the grace of which it is the symbol.

Our Lord and His Apostles teach us to set at nought spiritual pretensions which are not attended by their corresponding proofs. "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and walk?" It is very easy to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, You were born again in baptism. But to produce the substantiating facts is quite another matter.

It should be remembered that Baptism is not a ceremony done and done with at the hour of its solemnisation. It has a lifelong significance, and should have a lifelong influence.

**You have shown that Baptism is, by our Lord, closely connected with discipleship; what, then, is implied in being a disciple of Christ?**

In being Christ's disciple, in the full sense of the word, much more

is implied than the perfect docility of a learner towards a teacher in whom he has absolute confidence, and from whom he has everything to learn, and whom he has nothing to teach. It involves further the devoted loyalty of an adherent to his Leader. This our Lord makes absolutely indispensable to discipleship. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me **cannot** be My disciple." The tie of discipleship to Christ is more vital and more sacred than any human tie whatever. Hence the baptismal service regards Baptism as the engagement of a servant, and the enlistment and enrolment of a soldier of Christ. The baptized is, henceforth, Christ's **man**. The Christian teaching, with which the commission to baptize is indissolubly associated, is not merely the teaching of doctrinal tenets; it is beyond this the training in universal obedience to commands. "Teaching them to **observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.**"

Thus as the Israelites were "baptized unto Moses" (1 Cor. x. 2), so we are "baptized into Christ" (Rom. vi. 3), not only as our Teacher, but also as our Lawgiver and our Leader. In the very commission to baptize, our Lord connects Baptism with submission to His absolute and universal authority. "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them," etc. That the confession of Christ is an essential element of baptism, and was so regarded by the ancient Church, is plain from the universal admission that martyrdom superseded the necessity of Baptism, as did the confession of the dying thief.

**How is it possible to defend ourselves against the many man-made and misleading theories of Baptism?**

1. By resolutely and religiously adhering to the statements of our Lord and His inspired Apostles. 2. By refusing to attribute to baptism what the New Testament distinctly attributes to something else. This process excludes absolutely and entirely the notion of any saving efficacy in baptism apart from the faith of the baptized. Our Lord distinctly, positively, and decisively declares: "He that **believeth** and is baptized shall be saved." To leave out "believeth and" is to garble, and thus to falsify the words of Christ. Nor are we at liberty to hold that baptism conveys faith to the baptized; for we are positively assured that "Faith cometh by **hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.**" Hence saving faith is clearly not a faith in the efficacy of the ceremony, but in the absolute and universal trustworthiness of the Gospel proclamation, which baptism follows. In like

manner, St. Paul expressly states that if we are in baptism risen with Christ, it is "through **faith** in the operation of God" (Col. ii. 12). And, again, "Ye are all the sons of God, through **faith** in Christ Jesus. For as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 26, 27). Again, we are not allowed to attribute any **saving** efficacy to baptism apart from "the answer of a good conscience towards God" (1 Peter iii. 20-22).

### Is Baptism a declaratory act?

It is very expressively and impressively declaratory, and, in that sense, even demonstrative, as every symbolic rite must "**show forth**" the truths of which it is a symbol. These truths are, as we have seen, the necessity and the attainableness of remission of sins, purification, entire consecration, and incorporation into the glorious society which Christ came to institute. But it is a misleading mistake to affirm, as some able divines have done,\* that Baptism is **merely declaratory**, or that it is declaratory of truths which it does not at all symbolise; such as the universality of "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and the relation of the Second Adam to the entire race. We have seen that the symbolical significance of Baptism is placed on the very face of the rite itself, but it is hard to see why Baptism should be selected to **show forth** universal redemption. This is to mistake the glorious **presuppositions** of baptism for the especial purport and purpose of Baptism; and thus most unwarrantably and injuriously to keep out of sight the express design and significance of baptism. And this is precisely what the very best of these theologians do.

It is very noteworthy that Dr. Dale, for example, is unable to adduce in support of his view a single passage of Scripture in which any reference whatever to baptism can be found; and that, as a powerful expositor of the Epistle to the Ephesians, he is obliged to assign to baptism what, as a theologian, he refuses to allow it.

It is true, indeed, that but for the birth and death of the Second Adam Christian baptism would be utterly unavailing. But that is because the glorious privileges which Baptism so strikingly sets forth would be hopelessly unattainable. Dr. Dale most arbitrarily limits the significance and the effect of Baptism to that which Baptism does not symbolise, and declares that it has nothing to do with the grand facts which it does so beautifully and naturally symbolise, and with which it is directly connected in the New Testament. This great theologian,

\* *Manual of Congregational Principles*, p. 127, etc.

like Dr. Halley, from whom, not from Christ or His Apostles, he derives this doctrine, was led to take up this untenable and ineffective position, as the "Close-Communion Baptists" to take up theirs, by a dread of the High Church doctrine of baptismal regeneration. But we have seen that baptism has a precious meaning without importing the unscriptural conception of a new birth without verifiable results. The position of Dr. Halley and Dr. Dale obliges them to contend for **indiscriminate** baptism of all comers, young or old; since in their view baptism does nothing but declare a pre-existing relation between Christ and every man that cometh into the world.\*

### Of what, then, is Baptism declaratory?

Its declaratory function is indicated by its symbolical significance. (1) It declares that the Church of Christ is a Society, the members of which are bound, required, and by Divine grace enabled, to live as a pardoned and a purified people, and to cultivate holiness of heart, and to maintain holiness of life. (2) It declares that Christ's purpose in founding His Church was to "**purify unto Himself a peculiar people.**" It sets forth the **necessity** and the **attainableness** of **personal** pardon and purification. Baptism also announces that the grand Society—the Church which Christ instituted—still exists, and still admits new members.

**To what extent, and in what respects, are the Roman Catholic and the other High Church theologians in accordance with our Lord and His Apostles in their view of Baptism?**

1. In ascribing to Baptism very high importance and very deep significance, as against those who make it to be merely declaratory of doctrine which it does not even symbolize. Here they and the Baptists are one, and are both in accordance with Scripture.

2. In maintaining that baptism changes the relation of the baptized to the Church of Christ.

### Wherein are they wrong?

In attributing to Baptism, apart from believing, effects which our Lord and His Apostles distinctly connect with believing; and with Baptism only when the baptized believes.

\* Dr. Dale even goes so far as to say that the fact that the Baptism of an adult is impracticable without the consent of the person to be baptized, "may suggest a false conception of the rite," as baldly declarative of universal redemption. And, again: "The baptized person, even if an adult, is altogether passive!" Dr. Dale's *Manual*, p. 133.

**Are Roman Catholic and other High Church theologians agreed in their teaching with regard to Baptism?**

Very far from it! On scarcely any other subject is the pathology of theology so strange as in this. (1) The High Churchman Dodwell maintained the Church doctrine to be "that the soul of man is naturally mortal, but immortalised actually for punishment or reward by its union with the Divine Baptismal Spirit of Baptism from one who has been ordained by a bishop." (2) The greater number contend that the new birth is effected invariably and inevitably by and in the reception of the rite with or without faith on the part of the baptized. (3) Others teach that in some cases the new birth accompanies Infant Baptism, in others it does not. (4) Others hold that in Baptism is imparted, not the new birth itself, but a something without which the new birth is impossible,—some sort of **protoplasm**, or **basis** of spiritual life which awaits Faith, and is the only soul-state in which actual spiritual life is possible. It is supposed to make a human soul susceptible of regeneration, which before Baptism was, and without Baptism must have remained, insusceptible of the new birth. (5) That what is imparted in Infant Baptism is not the new birth, but a **germ** of spiritual life, which, when faith comes, is quickened into life. Something like this is held by some who do not belong to the High Church school. (6) St. Augustine's view, which is cloudy and unstable, yet, so far as it has any coherence, amounts to this: Baptism has a spell-like operation, altogether independent of the moral and spiritual state and attitude of the baptized or the baptiser. Augustine could not make up his mind whether Baptism, if administered as a practical joke or a theatrical travesty, was valid or not. He taught that the efficacy of Baptism consists in (a) the forgiveness of sins, up to the date of baptism (hence delay, as in his own case, might be very advantageous); (b) the translation of the baptized from a state of nature to a state of grace, which grace, however, may or may not be operative, may or may not be saving, since its saving effect is entirely dependent upon the **secret election or reprobation** of the individual **by the will of God**. Yet, for all that, the baptized, he maintained, has some sort of indefinable **quasi-regeneration**, **quasi-sonship**, **quasi-heirship** of eternal life, which can, however, come to nothing but aggravated damnation, if the baptized be not one of the elect. Calvin takes only half of Augustine's doctrine; he maintains that the Baptism of a non-elect person is simply so much spilt water. The Westminster divines hover between the position of Augustine and that of Calvin. According to Augustine, baptismal grace is given equally to the elect and the repro-

bate, but **saving** grace to the elect only. This, of course, establishes a momentous contrast between baptismal grace and **operative** grace ; between **sacramental** grace and **saving** grace. Augustine and Calvin and the Westminster divines agree only in making Baptismal grace worthless in the vast majority of cases ; namely, in the non-elect. But Augustine places the unreality in the imparted grace ; Calvin leaves its unreality in the performed ceremony ; the Westminster divines allow it a real, but deadly, effect on the non-elect.

(7) Those who try to hold at the same time regeneration by faith and regeneration by Baptism, without fail entangle themselves in inextricable contradictions. For example, the modern Reformed divine Sartorius maintains that "the soul rises to a new life by **faith**," and that "Baptism is the seal of our election" (*God's Everlasting Love*, p. 191) ; that "Baptism does give entire salvation in Christ to the whole man, who is only with the development of consciousness to become progressively conscious of it, as his own possession by faith" (194). Yet he asserts in the same paragraph, that though "salvation" is **given** to the baptized, yet **Divine grace is not yet** bestowed upon and communicated to him, and, therefore, is not at present, but only at a future time, effective. "Hence his state is still a pre-Christian one. He is **destined to be** a child of God ; but he cannot be evangelically brought up as a child. Grace has not prevented, but has to follow." Here baptismal **salvation** is asserted, whilst baptismal **grace** is denied. And yet we are told "Baptism is the principle of all Christian life ;" and "the **act of Baptism is the spring** of all Christian living ; the water which Christ gives becomes in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life (p. 196). Here the water of Baptism is **identified** with the water of spiritual life springing up in the soul. Again : "The actual state of grace and sonship begins with the act of baptism, of which a life in this state is the result" (p. 198). Thus the baptized is said to be in "the actual state of grace," although "grace is not yet bestowed upon and communicated to him." We are further told that baptism is "the antidote to original sin," and that it "creates" the new creature.

(8) Some hold that the spiritual life-germ implanted in baptism is indestructible ; others, that it may be lost ; others, again, that it can never be eradicated, but, if not quickened into life by faith, it changes into a deadly thing.

(9) Dr. Newman and others contend that "by Baptism original sin is washed away, and such influences of grace given and promised as make it the child's own fault if he, in the event, fails of re-

ceiving an eternal inheritance of blessing." Others say : All are born again in Baptism, but nearly all lose the gift in very early life.

(10) Many maintain that **regeneration**, in its **Church-sense**, does not mean any moral or spiritual change whatever ; but merely a **privileged status** as a member of the visible Church. The objection to this view is that it gives a meaning to the word for which there is no valid Scripture authority. Nevertheless, according to the New Testament, Baptism is the rite of admission into the new **Society** of Christ's disciples.

In short, so multitudinous and multiform and contradictory are the High Church theories of baptismal regeneration that what has been well said as to the doctrine of the indelible character of episcopal ordination as "an unreiterable sacrament" equally applies to the High Church views of Baptism. "As to the **whereabouts** of the 'character' there was no less variety of sentiment, some placing it in the **essence of the soul**, others in the **understanding** ; some in the **will**, and others, more plausibly, in the **imagination**, etc., so that the whole of what they agreed upon amounted to this, that in the unreiterable sacraments, as they call them, **something**, they **know not what**, is imprinted, they know not **how**, on something in the soul of the recipient, they know not **where**."

That profound and vigorous thinker, the late Canon Mozley, on the other hand, Scripturally and sensibly maintained, that "if baptized children grow up without any signs of a new nature, they never were regenerate in Baptism," and holds up to question the scholastic theory of "**infused habits**" of faith, hope, charity, and other supernatural virtues, which produce **no acts**.

This enumeration is very far from exhausting the various hypotheses resorted to by those who attribute to Baptism, apart from faith, the effect which our Lord and His Apostles expressly ascribe to Baptism conjoined with faith.

**On what passages of Scripture do those who teach the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration apart from faith principally rely ?**

That which is put in the forefront is John iii. 5 : "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But this declaration gives not the slightest countenance to the doctrine ; inasmuch as it does not even hint the non-necessity to salvation of that which our Lord and His Apostles continuously affirm

to be necessary to salvation, namely, **believing**. Nay, the context most positively and repeatedly declares **believing** to be indispensable to salvation : "That whosoever **believeth** in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (ver. 16). Expositors and theologians have no right whatever to violently detach one part of our Lord's declaration from the other part, and then give to the former a meaning inconsistent with the latter. Moreover, our Lord never affirms that the birth of water and the birth of the Spirit must in every case be simultaneous, much less that they are identical. Indeed, our Lord clearly implies that the one is to be distinguished from the other. And John the Baptist had contrasted them : "I indeed baptize you with **water**, unto repentance, but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."

**What, then, is the birth of water as distinguished from the birth of the Spirit ?**

It is noteworthy that Nicodemus, to whom the idea of a new birth into a new life seemed so inconceivable, had no difficulty whatever as to the birth of water into a new Society. There is very strong evidence that a convert from heathenism to Judaism was admitted to the temple-worship by Baptism ; and it is certain that John the Baptist had made Baptism the outer gate into the kingdom of heaven ; whilst the Baptism which he could not give, that by the Holy Ghost, was the inner gate. It is also known that the baptized convert to Judaism was said to be "born again." By which phrase no one ever dreamt of meaning that he experienced a change of nature as the effect of Baptism, but only that he was born into the Jewish Church. By his Baptism he ceased to belong to the heathen world, and was born into "the Commonwealth of Israel." To express the fact in modern modes of speech, baptism was recognized as the most important and significant turning-point, crisis, era, or epoch in a man's outward religious history ; and, if accompanied by the corresponding dispositions, of the inward, spiritual history also. It was essentially, in the first instance, as we have seen, a separating, discriminating service ; and then a uniting service. It separated him from not only "the seat of the scorners" and "the way of sinners," but also from "the counsel of the ungodly." Baptism came between him and his past impenitence, ungodliness, self-righteousness, and unbelief ; between him and the dead past, and he "let the dead past bury its dead" aims and habits. It united him to "the whole company of faithful people." Henceforth he was "joined to all the living," and there was "hope." And it must be remembered that

Christ came not only to bring a new life from heaven to earth, but also to found upon earth a new Society.

The idea of birth into a new Society as well as into a new life should not seem strange to us, since we have similar forms of speech. For example, when a foreigner, by a legal public process, gives up his native nationality and adopts that of the country in which he resides, he is said to be not only nationalised but naturalised, and thus acquires the privileges and incurs the responsibilities of a native of the country.

Baptizing with water, as administered by John and by Jesus Himself, through His disciples, was the prominent religious service of the time; and the context shows that disputes "about purifying" and "Baptism" amongst "the Jews" were rife at the time. Nicodemus must at once have thought of Baptism, as one naturally does in reading it to-day. The words "born of water" bear the like relation to Baptism to that which the words in a subsequent chapter of John's Gospel, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood," etc. (John vi. 53), bear to the Lord's Supper. If the words do not directly refer to the rite, the rite refers to the truth expressed by the words; and in either case both words and rite refer to the same great spiritual truth.

It is very significant that in the rest of the discourse our Lord says nothing about the water, but concentrates the attention on the Spirit.

By birth of water, then, or Baptism, a man enters the kingdom of heaven as a Society or community; by birth of the Spirit a man enters the same kingdom as the sphere of his own personal life. We "live in the Spirit," not in the water. It is certain that Christ Himself did not make water-baptism indispensable to salvation: witness the thief on the cross. If our Lord had said, **Every one that is born of water is at the same time born of the Spirit**, He would have taught the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration; but He does not say anything that fairly covers any such statement, whilst the context is fatal to it.

Another passage relied on by High Church claimants is Titus iii. 5: "He saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly." As Baptism is not mentioned in this passage, it is far from certain that St. Paul refers distinctly and directly to Baptism. It is his wont, when Baptism is immediately referred to, to mention it by name. However, it is unquestionable, from the very terms of the text, that St. Paul is speaking of a fact of actual experience, not of an unverified doctrine. When this experience actually accompanies or follows Baptism, it

is to be recognised and rejoiced in. But regeneration and renewing by the Holy Ghost **must tell** upon the **consciousness** and character. In any case, we find nothing here to modify, much less to obliterate, the express terms of the Church's original commission to baptize, which indissolubly connects the **saving** efficacy of Baptism with **believing**, either going before Baptism, or accompanying it, or else following it up.

A third passage much insisted on by the maintainers of Baptismal Regeneration apart from faith is 1 Peter iii. 20, 21 : " Wherein few, that is eight, souls were saved through water, which also, after a true likeness, doth now save you, even baptism : not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God" (R.V.). But in this Scripture the saving efficacy of Baptism is distinctly attached to the "**conscience,**" or **consciousness, of the baptized** person. St. Peter clearly makes "the answer of a good conscience toward God" essential to the saving efficacy of Baptism. If St. Peter teaches anything by this passage, it is that so long as "the answer of a good conscience toward God" is wanting, the saving efficacy of Baptism has neither accompanied nor followed the outward rite. This passage, then, so far from favouring the doctrine of the unconscious regeneration of a passive recipient of Baptism, is fatal to it. If St. Peter had left the statement, "Baptism doth now save us," unhedged and unexplained, then unconscious salvation by unconscious Baptism might have been affirmed. But he most carefully, and not without reason, repudiates and forbids the supposition that salvation can have accompanied Baptism, when "the answer of a good conscience" has not.

But does not St. Augustine's doctrine of a dormant grace imparted in Baptism, and that of a germ of spiritual life which is, after all, no birth at all, each requiring Faith to make it in any wise effectual, really amount to a clear admission that Baptism without Faith is necessarily unsaving ?

Plainly ; for dormant, ineffective grace is not saving grace, and an unconscious life-germ is not birth, and Baptism is, on this hypothesis, still dependent on faith for its efficiency.

**What, then, is the charm or what the harm of the hypothesis ?**

The harm is assuredly very grave, as its charm is very great ; (1) insomuch as we have seen that it gives to the word **Grace**, as an imparted gift, a meaning for which there is no Scripture-warrant

whatever ; “grace given” always implies, in the New Testament, a consciously realised power. (2) It also gives to the words “new birth” a meaning quite unknown to Holy Writ. (3) It gives people an illusive idea of their own spiritual state, leading them to suppose themselves to be the regenerate children of God, even when their dispositions and conduct prove them to be children of the devil. (4) It practically makes the Christian salvation dependent on a particular body of men, since the very beginning of spiritual life is made to be dependent on Baptism by a priest. This, in truth, is the fascination of the dogma to the High Church clergy. (5) It gives to the Christian salvation an air of unreality. For, just as the doctrine of transubstantiation not only asserts a miraculous transformation of the bread and wine into something infinitely different, whilst yet retaining every property and quality which ever constituted them bread and wine, thus involving the performance of another miracle, to make them seem to be still that which they no longer are ; so this doctrine of unfelt, inactive grace demands a second miracle to prevent so powerful and active a force as Divine grace being felt by its possessor and undetected by observers. (6) Its tendency is to degrade the Christian sacraments into a species of white magic, and it must also be remembered that at the time of the invention of the dogma and onward through the Dark and the Middle Ages, there was a “white magic,” as well as a black,—a notion of occult powers in nature for good as well as for evil, which could be evoked by spoken spell or acted charm ; by a certain form of words and a certain kind of movement. Those who first formulated the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration apart from the faith of the baptized—the two African bishops Cyprian and Augustine—evidently supposed that by pronouncing the names of the three Persons of the Godhead, some occult virtue is infused into the water which, by contact with the body of the baptized, is conveyed into the soul, depositing there some kind of physical basis for the spiritual life. Both these men of genius were converted from heathen philosophy to Christianity late in life. Thus originated the doctrine of sacramental efficacy apart from the faith of the recipient, and the whole delusive system of salvation by the official acts of a priestly order. This doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration is made the first link in the chain of bondage to the priesthood. Thus the ministers of Christ are transformed into spiritual magicians ; and the solemn formula of baptism which came from Christ’s own lips is turned into an incantation, like “the words that split Eildon hills in three.” It was the common-sense perception of this fact that identified the

muttered "**Hoc est Corpus**" of the priest with the **hocus pocus** of the conjurer.

It is perfectly plain, from the account given by Justin Martyr, the earliest uninspired expositor of Christian ritual, that the entire spiritual and moral benefit of Baptism is connected with the repentance of the baptized; and that the Christian intellect of that time had no idea of sacramental efficacy apart from the concurrent mental activity of the recipient. This notion, too, was an ecclesiastical afterthought.

It is also clear from the writings of the great Alexandrian teachers Clement and Origen, that in the early centuries of the Church the connection between Baptism and Christian teaching and training was close and vital.

### **What is the meaning of Infant Baptism ?**

Infant Baptism is the link between the Church and the Family. The children of believers have a **sanctity of relation** to God; and so have the unbelieving wives and husbands of believing husbands and wives (1 Cor. vii. 14). But the children of believers do not escape the stain and warp of original sin, and the consequent necessity of being born again. They are not born into the Church; so then the rite of admission cannot be transformed into a rite of recognition. The analogy of circumcision is directly against the spiritual and moral efficacy of the rite apart from the faith of the recipient.

### **What objection is there to the idea that it is the purpose of Christian education to elicit, educe, or develop the grace imparted by Baptism ?**

The decisive objection to that idea is that it is not substantiated by the facts of experience, as it could not but be if it were true. A doctrine of grace which cannot appeal for its verification to consciousness and experience cannot be sustained by appeal to Scripture; which throughout makes grace to be a verifiable fact, not a hypothesis unsupported by fact. "For the kingdom of God is **not in word, but in power**" (1 Cor. iv. 20). Holy Scripture knows nothing of unconscious or unfelt grace. Grace in Scripture is "tasted," "felt," experienced. We have seen that St. Augustine, the first formulator of the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration without faith in the recipient, is driven to the theory of a dormant as it were hibernating grace, which faith quickens into life; and that in like manner a large proportion of those

who stoutly maintain that an infant is born again in Baptism, deny as stoutly that the words "born again" in the Liturgy mean the same thing as the same words mean in the New Testament. This is to trifle, not with the word of God only, but also with the speech of man. The natural birth of the baptized infant, the date of which is registered beside that of its Baptism, was no mere impartation of a germ, but was a **veritable** and verifiable, a conscious and manifested life. No one can guiltlessly put upon God's words and upon Christ's institution a significance of his own invention, to suit his own theological tastes and theories.

### Is Infant Baptism, then, warranted by Scripture?

Nothing can be more beautiful,—one might almost say sublime,—nothing more Christian, than the sentiment of Infant Baptism. It breathes the spirit of the Master. This sentiment is exquisitely expressed in the Baptismal Service: "Beloved, ye hear in this Gospel," etc. This sentiment gains strength from the distinct affirmation of Scripture that the children of a believing father or mother are, in the loving eye of God, invested with a sanctity of **relationship** to God, which does not belong to the offspring of unbelieving parents. A sanctity of **relationship**, not of nature, for it is "by faith" that the "heart" is **purified**. It must be borne in mind that, as we have seen according to the Scriptures, **sanctity** is twofold; it is, **first**, a sanctity of **relationship**, and, secondly, a sanctity of **nature, disposition, and character**. "Now the Scripture speaketh expressly" that the sanctity of relationship is extended from the parent to the offspring, until definitively sinned away by the offspring, through impenitent unbelief. But it is equally clear that the sanctity of nature is not communicated along with the sanctity of relationship, but awaits the personal faith of each individual human being. Even under the Old Covenant, the plea for special Divine regard is seen to be as valid as it is touching: "The seed of Abraham, Thy friend" (2 Chron. xx. 7). In this sense, the Jews are called "the holy seed" (Ezra ix. 2). A true friendship has regard to the children of one's friend. St. Peter and St. Paul alike claim this sanctity of **relationship** for all the descendants of Abraham. St. Peter said on the day of Pentecost: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers" (Acts iii. 25). "For the promise is unto you, and to your children." The promise here referred to is plainly that which was given originally to Abraham in person: "To be a God unto thee and to thy seed." Which promise is repeated through Isaiah, in

Gospel terms, and with reference to Gospel times. "I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed and My blessing upon thine offspring, and they shall spring up among the grass as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel" (Isa. xlv. 3-5). Here the promise is, not of a latent grace, but of a grace the growth of which is beautifully visible; not a hypothetical, inoperative grace, whatever that might be conceived to be, but of a veritable and self-verifying grace, full of prompting and of power.

Hence it could not but have been a severe shock to a believing Israelite had he been told that circumcision was abolished, yet Baptism was denied to his little ones. The consecration of child-life by the glorious mystery of Christ's own holy incarnation, the Second Adam entering the world as an infant, not, like the first Adam, as a full-grown man, and Christ's own bearing towards and teaching with regard to children, would lead the Jewish parent to assume that his children were the children of the promise and of the covenant. And the heathen convert, whether the jailer at Philippi or Stephanas at Corinth, would irresistibly claim the like privilege for his own "household," especially as, had he joined the Jewish Church, his children would have been admitted with him. St. Paul states this as a general principle. "If the first-fruits be holy, so also is the lump; and if the root be holy, so are the offshoots" (Rom. xi. 16 [R.V.]). The Israelites not only dedicated to God the first-gathered ears of the harvest, signifying thereby that the whole year's produce was the Lord's; they also set apart a handful of dough in every household-baking, signifying that the whole batch of bread was God's. So when a man dedicates himself to God, he also dedicates his family; and God, on His part, graciously accepts the dedication, and enters into a relation of especial tenderness and sacredness to the offspring of believers; a relation which implies not only a claim on the children as His, but also a reception and acceptance of them in answer to His people's offer. Now every one can at once see and feel how suitable a service Infant Baptism is to show forth and symbolize this tender and sacred relationship to God borne by the children of His people. Still further, in a most solemn and touching passage in Ezekiel (xvi. 20, 21) God expressly calls the children of His people "My children." The Abrahamic covenant is substantially taken over into the Christian covenant. On this point Matthew Henry's doctrine and his father's practice are of great importance.

**But has the Church of Christ any authorization for the employment of Baptism as a dedicatory rite ?**

It has ; on condition that the act of dedication be in order to discipleship. Our Lord, as we have seen, in giving His Church its commission and command to baptize in connection with evangelization, strictly binds Baptism to discipleship, and joins it with Christian teaching and training ; so that the Church has no right to baptize either infants or adults without reference to discipleship, teaching, and training. But He does not decide whether the Baptism shall take place before the teaching begins or at some after-stage of teaching and training. Yet Baptism, being initiation into discipleship, most fittingly anticipates the teaching and the training. Under the Old Covenant, the date of circumcision was rigidly fixed to the very "day," but no such rigidity or precision obtains under the New. Hence there are differences of opinion and practice in the various Churches with regard to the proper age for Baptism.

**But is this symbolical significance of Baptism which we have seen to be so simple and intelligible preserved in Infant Baptism ?**

Yes ; the need of spiritual washing, and the Divine provision for that washing, is set forth and symbolized in the one case as in the other.

**What, then, does Baptism effect and secure for the infant who is baptized ?**

It effects and secures everything which can possibly be effected anterior to, and apart from, the personal faith of the baptized, except that which has already been effected and secured by other and higher means. Baptism plainly cannot effect or secure what has already been effected and secured for every human being by the Second Adam. It, therefore, cannot be (1) the cancelling of the entailed sentence of condemnation for the sin of the first Adam ; this work, in all its power and glory, belongs to the Second Adam, entirely and exclusively, in such wise that nothing is left for any other priesthood or ministry whatever to perform. Hence St. Paul determines that, in the fifth of Romans, before he begins to treat of Baptism, in the sixth. It cannot (2) impart to the child a capacity for, or a susceptibility of, the convincing, restraining, alluring, renewing and sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit. In plain words, it cannot impart to the child reason and conscience. Every child has that already by birth ; it is an integral part of his redeemed nature. (3) It cannot

wash away the guilt of personal sin. For, in the first place, no infant can have any personal sin to wash away; and, in the second place, pardon, justification, or by whatever other term the washing away of personal sin is signified in Scripture, is distinctly and, with reiteration and emphasis, attributed to **faith**; and whenever in Scripture it is connected with Baptism, is the act, not of the baptizer, but of the baptized: "**Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.**" It cannot (4) effect personal adoption into the family of God; for "**Ye are all the children of God by faith.**" It cannot (5) beget faith; for "**faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**" (6) It cannot effect the purification of the heart; for we are distinctly told in Scripture the means, the agency, and the result of such purification. The heart is "**purified by obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren.**" (7) It cannot forestall the personal activity of the individual soul. According to the Scriptures no man can believe by proxy, or be saved by the official acts of another.

**What advantage, then, hath the baptized, or what profit is there in Infant Baptism?**

By it is secured to the baptized a place in the Infant School of Christ, and other great and blessed privileges. (1) Baptism solemnly and publicly admits the child within the sheltering pale of the Church of Christ. It gives him a name and a place in that Church. It gives him his "**Christian name,**" as enrolled in the Christian community; a name implying a relationship and a status which he before had not. His other name is his secular name. The Christian name is a "**new name;**" chosen indeed by the parents, but given by the Church. In ancient times a convert from heathenism always received a new, a Christian name. Hence, in baptizing, no mention is made of the surname. The baptismal register is a Church register, or it is a mockery. The infant is received into Christ's fold. For Christ has His "**lambs**" as well as His "**sheep,**" and the commission to those who love Him is, "**Feed My lambs.**" (2) Baptism thus **commits the Church** to take special care of the little ones whom it has baptized. They are henceforth the **wards** of the Church. Baptism also **commits the parents** to bring the child up "**in the nurture and discipline of the Lord.**" The Church has no right whatever to baptize any child without looking for a fair guarantee that the child shall be treated, taught, and trained as an enrolled disciple of Christ. Without this the sacrament is degraded into a mere concession to custom. (3) It

**commits the child**, places him under a most solemn obligation. And—with reverence and godly fear be it spoken, and yet with gratitude and confidence—(4) it **commits the Head of the Church and Hearer of Prayer** to look upon the child with special tenderness and regard, as His own lamb, “brought unto Him,” placed solemnly and trustingly in His arms, and laid upon His breast. It is, therefore, especially incumbent on parents and Pastors to teach baptized children, as soon as they can understand it, the meaning of their Baptism. It is incumbent on them to remind themselves to what they on their part are committed also. Parents and Pastors should gently and tenderly assure the child, **God has done all for you that He can do; we have done all for you that we can do, pending your own choice and trust.** But without your own free choice and trust you cannot be saved.

The principles, the sentiment, and the significance of Infant Baptism have never been so pictorially and persuasively put as by Bunyan. When Christian reaches the house **Beautiful** he is interrogated by **Piety, Prudence, and Charity**. When he had satisfied Piety and Prudence, then said **Charity** to him: “Have you a family? Are you a married man?”—Christian: “I have a wife and four **small children.**”—**Charity**: “And **why did you not bring them along with you?**” Then Christian wept and said, “O how willingly would I have done it! but they were all of them utterly averse to my going on pilgrimage.” He is still more searchingly tested on this point, before he himself can be recognised as a worthy member of the Church. Now, Infant Baptism places the little ones themselves under the loving charge of Piety, Prudence, and Charity; and of the house **Beautiful** they are made inmates in their infancy. The child finds himself domesticated in the house **Beautiful**, and in his very nursery he sees how beautiful it is. Thus the City of God has all the varieties of life, from “old men leaning on the staff for very age,” to “children playing in the streets,” or “sitting in the market-place calling to their fellows.” In Infant Baptism parents and Pastors with the whole Church put forth a holy eagerness to bring the child to Christ, as did the friends of the paralysed in the Gospel to place before Him one who could not come himself.

Infant Baptism, then, fully accords with the true idea of a Christian family, which should be aimed at by all, and has been reached by some. It is thus happily presented by Jonathan Edwards: “Every Christian family ought to be, as it were, a little Church, consecrated to Christ, and wholly influenced and governed by His rules. And family

education and order are some of the chief helps, in the absence of which other means are likely to prove ineffectual. If these are duly maintained all the means of grace are likely to prosper."

Again, in Infant Baptism the child has the incalculable advantage of the united prayers of God's people on his behalf: "Regard, we beseech Thee, the prayers of this congregation." These prayers cannot go for nothing. Assuredly, they secure a special reversion of Divine influence on behalf of the child, to take effect on the earliest forthputting of intelligence and blossoming of sensibility. A special measure of alluring and enabling as well as of restraining grace is secured for the baptized child. But we should not prefer to think that this grace is given in the form of a dead deposit, hidden somewhere in the child's nature. It is in the hand of God, dealt out by Him, and "to be testified in due time." **This** grace is not like the High Church inoperative efficacy of the sacrament, but is verifiable, and is verified in innumerable instances. Others besides John and Charles Wesley can say—

"Thou great mysterious God unknown,  
Whose love has gently led me on  
Even from my infant days."

and

"I sing of Thy grace,  
From my earliest days  
Ever near to allure and defend."

How frequently a corresponding statement is made in our Love-feasts!

And thus is fulfilled the parental prayer:

"That He Who stills the raven's clamorous nest,  
And clothes the lily fair in flowery pride,  
Will, in the way His wisdom sees the best,  
For them and for their little ones provide;  
**But chiefly in their hearts with grace Divine preside."**

But Justification, Adoption, and Regeneration, both as a matter of Scripture teaching and of Christian experience, come in answer to personal faith.

### Where should Baptism be administered?

Certainly before the Church or Christian congregation, unless either the child or the parents be unfitted by illness to come or to be brought. Baptism is a Church solemnity, not a private, domestic, or social celebration. Whenever Baptism is administered, all who witness the

solemnity should be tenderly and pressingly reminded of the meaning and of the responsibilities of their own Baptism.

**But is it not possible for an infant to be born again? And was not John the Baptist full of the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb?**

Certainly. Dying infants go to heaven, and in order to that they "must be born again." But there are considerations on this point which must never be lost sight of, and which forbid us to conclude and affirm that regeneration takes place in Baptism apart from Faith. (1) We do not know in what way or by what means the change takes place in dying or departed infants. (2) We do know that the change which takes place in dying or departed infants in order to their admission into heaven is widely different from that which the advocates of Baptismal Regeneration assert with regard to baptized infants who survive. In order to admission into heaven there cannot but be a **conscious and recognisable** birth of the Spirit. The infant's spirit in heaven is manifestly born of the Spirit. Its new birth is no mere infusion of latent grace, like that which the facts of human life compel the assertors of this doctrine to suppose. (3) The statement that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb is the record of a **historical fact**, not the revelation of an occult theological mystery. It is the testimony of those who knew John in and from his infancy. Moreover, John was not baptized, and dying infants go to heaven whether baptized or not. The salvation of dying infants is conclusive against the doctrine that Baptism is the remedy for original sin.

Infant Baptism is a strong inducement to seek for and to hope for the conversion of our children in their childhood.

It has been customary in some families and circles to give to baptized infants love-gifts, neither the value nor the sentiment of which the child can realize till after-life. But the time comes when they can be pointed to and presented, and put into the keeping of those to whom they belong, and the giver be thought of with gratitude, and the gift itself appreciated both for its associations and its intrinsic worth. So also of Baptism. Baptism is the gift of God, of the parents, and of the Church. It says to the child, and its speech should be interpreted: "Even in and from thy infancy thy heavenly Father has claimed and cared for **thy** soul, even **thine**. Thy parents have cared for thy soul, and already given thee to the Lord. Thy Pastors and God's people have cared for thee, and presented thee to Christ." And

as to the reversion of a special spiritual influence on the baptized, there is no more real difficulty in our heavenly Father's setting apart, as it were, and securing to a child a special measure of the Spirit, to be imparted at the fitting time, than in an earthly parent's setting apart a sum of money, or other gift, to be put into the child's hand when he is able to understand and appreciate and make use of it, and take care of it. There is no more need that the grace which Baptism both symbolizes and bespeaks should be given to the infant before it can possibly make any use of it, or is able to take care of it, than any love-gift of an earthly parent.

Thus Infant Baptism becomes, veritably and substantively, to the baptized a sign, a seal, and a pledge, to assure him of the grace which it typifies and tenders; as a remembered sermon may be the means of salvation, although when heard it took no good effect. The actual reception of a love-gift settled upon an infant, but not put into his possession, might be made conditional on some simple terms which would not in the slightest impair the gratuitousness of the gift. And the baptized infant is the beneficiary of all the blessings which Christian Baptism sets forth.

St. Paul's arguments and appeals with regard to Baptism thus become as pertinent and as pressing to one baptized in infancy as to one baptized in riper years. The meaning of Baptism is the same in the one case as in the other—namely, Your Baptism commits you to a Christian life. See the Lives of Philip and Matthew Henry.

And even as a Christian Minister's attendance at the Ordination of others is felt to be most solemn and impressive, reminding him of his own obligations, so witnessing the Baptism of others should most solemnly remind us of our own. This is very beautifully and strikingly stated in *The Book of Common Order* of the Scottish Kirk:—

“Dearly beloved, it is not only of necessity that we be once baptized, but also it much profiteth oft to be present at the ministration thereof; that we, being put in mind of the league and covenant made between God and us, that He will be our God and we His people, He our Father and we His children, may have occasion as well to try our lives past as our present conversation, and to prove ourselves whether we stand fast in the faith of God's elect, or contrariwise have strayed from Him.”

Persons who were baptized in riper years have need to be reminded of their Baptism, as well as those baptized in infancy. St. Paul's “**Know ye not,**” etc., applies alike to both (Rom. vi. 3). Without consideration of its meaning, with all its legible symbolic truth, Baptism becomes but a bold and clear-cut inscription in a lost language; with-

out frequent recollection, it becomes a worn and weed-grown inscription on the face of a rock.

The ancient Knight, member of a consecrated brotherhood, was wont to repel temptation to anything impure, ignoble, or unworthy by an appeal to his "halidom," *i.e.*, holihood, not to his holiness. That is to say, by reminding himself and his tempter of the holy relation and responsibilities into which he had been brought by the symbolic ceremony which made him a Knight. So should we, in our temptations, remind ourselves and our tempter of our Baptism; for Baptism, in our case, as in that of our Master and Example, is designed to fortify us against "the crafts and assaults of the devil." Baptism is the Christian soldier's banner.

We all need also to be reminded that by Baptism we are committed to a profession of faith, a confession of Christ, so that for any baptized man to excuse his irreligious life by saying, "I make no profession," is to belie his Baptism. Thus he "who came to Jesus by night" "secretly for fear of the Jews," is told at once that he must be born of water as well as of the Spirit, ought to be enrolled in the new heavenly Society as well as experience the new heavenly life.

The abandonment of infants was one of the worst features of the corrupt civilization of heathenism; the sacredness of infancy and infant-life was one of the revelations of Christianity to heathenism. Christ's coming consecrates the cradle, even though it be a manger.

**How is the strong objection to Infant Baptism which is manifested by many intelligent and devoted Christians to be accounted for?**

It is a not unnatural revulsion from the unscriptural and perilous teaching which has been connected with the holy rite. The doctrine of profound, vital, and saving transformation of the soul, which yet produces no necessary corresponding effect upon the moral and spiritual being, is so alien from and so abhorrent to the teaching alike of Scripture and of common sense, and so hazardous and harmful in its tendency and, in numberless instances, its actual results, that earnest, thoughtful minds have revolted against the institution.

How deleterious and how dangerous this doctrine is even in its milder form, and how incongruous with the spirit and the letter of the Gospel, is seen and felt by any one who, with New Testament truth in his mind and heart, listens to the teaching, with regard to it, even of some who repudiate Romanism. Dr. Jacobson, the late Bishop of Chester, who had been Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, thus

explained, in our own hearing, to some hundreds of young people whom he was about to confirm, the relation in which they stood to God. He told them: You were all born again in Baptism, and the Divine life which you then received is nourished by the Holy Communion to which you are now admitted. I hope that you will pray at least twice a day, although in many cases your prayers must be very short. I hope you will read a passage of Scripture every day, however short. But whatever else you do or leave undone, never, on any account but severe illness, omit to take the Holy Communion, which alone can keep alive the life you received at Baptism. How it had been kept alive in the interval he did not explain.

Thus the soul's reliance was made to rest upon the ministrations of a priesthood. In like manner we heard it affirmed by Dr. Hook, that the dying Christian's main dependence must be upon the two sacraments. Professor Sewell, in his published Sermons to his pupils at the great school at Radley, near Oxford, tells them that, though they lie, curse, and indulge in vicious habits, yet they are none the less regenerate.

Hence, although our Lord has clearly left the age at which Baptism shall be administered to the judgment and the sentiment of His people, only telling them that Baptism and discipleship must be connected; and although it is certain from the New Testament, that the Apostles baptized households of believers; and although it is not possible to find the date at which Infant Baptism originated, if it arose at any time subsequent to the apostolic age, yet many earnest, thoughtful minds condemn the usage.

The application to infants of passages in the Epistles addressed to adults, even whilst the wide difference between the Baptismal Service for Infants from that for Adults is a practical admission of the wide and undeniable difference between the cases, actually shocks the Christian principles and the common sense of many believers. But the doctrine of Infant Baptism which we have deduced from Scripture is open to not one of the objections which lie so heavily against the doctrine of the **then and there** regeneration of an unconscious babe, which need not perceptibly affect the manifestations of the child's disposition; thus depriving of its moral quality the grand spiritual, saving change which Christianity demands and imparts.

Another doctrine which had been connected with Infant Baptism is so clearly contrary to Scripture that many reflective Christians could not receive it; namely, that in Infant Baptism the faith of the sponsors is accepted instead of that of the child, and accomplishes the same

effect. The original doctrine of the English Prayer-Book looked like this. To the question, "Why, then, are infants baptized when, by reason of their tender age, they cannot perform?"—*i. e.*, the conditions on which the efficacy of Baptism depends, namely, faith and confession of Christ,—the answer is, "They do perform them by their sureties." But this was wisely altered, and now stands: "Because they promise them both by their sureties; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform." This clearly means that Baptism in infancy does not preclude the necessity of personal faith and confession of Christ, but simply anticipates that personal faith and confession of Christ; and it asserts that the spiritual efficacy of Baptism awaits that personal faith and confession of Christ. And this was the reason and the meaning of the system of sponsorship. Admission to the Lord's Supper is on this ground delayed till the baptized is able to do his part. Thus Confirmation is the complement of Infant Baptism.

This doctrine of an ineffective regeneration is becoming more and more conducive to infidelity. The age demands **reality**, and it is this making the Christian salvation a thing of theory, instead of personal realization and manifestation, a thing for which Christ's redeemed must be dependent on the official acts of a certain class of men; it is this which has produced in so many minds distrust, dislike, and even dread of an institution, the design of which is to show to the children of believers "the kindness of God." According to the Scriptures, the new birth is a **Divine effect** which makes a mighty difference between the man or child on whom it is wrought and the man or child who has it not. "Old things are passed away, **behold!** all things are become new." To say that a human being with the spiritual and moral tastes, habits, and other characteristics of an unregenerate man or child, and without the spiritual and moral tastes, habits, and other characteristics which are indicated by God Himself as the indispensable and indisputable marks of the new birth, is to ask our belief in a fiction to the full as gross and glaring as that which asserts bread and wine which retain all the qualities of bread and wine, and have none of the qualities of flesh and blood, are none the less flesh and blood, and no longer bread and wine, because a priest has pronounced over them certain words, and made over them certain manual movements. And, therefore, God's believing people may not allow the **new birth** and Divine grace to be theorized into impotence and unreality in the interests of a pretentious and usurping priesthood. The words "born again" and "grace **given**" in the New Testament always indicate a perceptible and powerful action

and effect on the mind, the heart, and the will, resulting in the infusing or creating a gracious, Godward, holy bent and habit of the soul, of which the active, ever-prompting, and empowering principle is "faith which is energized by love." It may not be tolerated that any man or body of men should assume to give another, and that an arbitrary and inane, meaning to words which He Who inspired them has Himself interpreted. A new birth which leaves the soul still "dead in trespasses and sins," and **Grace** which is even more powerless than Law, Christ and His Apostles would be "ashamed of." True, the processes of regeneration are inscrutable; but the proofs of it are patent and palpable, as our Lord declared and reasoned in His discourse to Nicodemus on this very subject.

St. Peter rests his proof of the reality of Christ's own reign on the powers and the phenomena of Pentecost. "He being exalted hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear" (Acts ii. 33) The water of Baptism should not be imagined by Christians to act as the Hindoos fancy the Ganges to act upon the infant that has been dipped beneath its waves. No doubt, the act of the Hindoos was at first merely symbolical, but it grew into a superstition and a spell.

How revolting this doctrine is to the unsophisticated conscience may be seen from Prescott's account of the Mexican chief, who, being condemned to be burnt to death for defending his country against the robbery of the Roman Catholic soldiers, was offered baptism as a guarantee of admission into the Christian heaven, replied, "No, save me from meeting such men in another world!"

The intense evil of attaching to a word, the original and ordinary meaning of which is perfectly plain, an arbitrary sense, just to make it suit a hypothesis, is palpable. It introduces hopeless confusion into any science, and worst of all into theology. Examples of this we have too many, *e.g.*, the giving a transcendental, metaphysical meaning to the word **everlasting**, to escape the doctrine of everlasting punishment. This artifice is cunningly imitated by the leading advocates of atheism and heathenism. Thus, Mr. Frederick Harrison tries to pass off his rejection of all religion by calling it "**religion**;" and Mr. Swinburne cloaks his heathenish sensualism under the very name of "**holiness**"!

This doctrine of a dormant regeneration in ungodly people is even worse than Carlyle's dogma of "**latent morality**" in men of "lawless hearts" and graceless lives.

The vagueness and fluidity of teaching with regard to baptismal grace, rendered necessary by its want of support in the facts of ex-

perience, are also seriously injurious to Christian theology, since they make it "indistinct, as water is in water."

But for the deleterious dogmas which have been permitted to encrust this beautiful and blessed institution, its beauty and blessedness would be at once recognized, and its accordance with the spirit and the letter of Holy Writ. **The child in the Church** is a Christian conception, as legitimate as it is lovely. The family should be, and in the perfect, the ideal Church will be, the ground, not only of the State, but also of the Church.

**But must not every one enter "the kingdom of heaven as a little child"?** and does not this imply perfect passiveness and receptiveness?

Yes, but the passiveness and receptiveness which the Gospel requires is spontaneous passiveness and voluntary receptiveness.

**Am I to understand, then, that Baptism and salvation do not always go together?**

They do not. As Archbishop Ussher says: "Some have the outward sign and not the inward grace; some have the inward grace and not the outward sign." In like manner Archbishop Cranmer: "All that are washed with water be not washed with the Holy Spirit."

Seeing, then, that the significance and importance of Baptism and the reality of its benefits as deduced from the New Testament are so plain, how is it to be accounted for that so many able and earnest preachers and writers maintain that it is merely declaratory of a relation that has always existed?

These views, too, are traceable to reactionary, polemical positions, or theories invented to fit in with theologic systems not derived from the Scriptures. The leading propounder of this doctrine, Maurice, was brought up a Unitarian. He maintained that every human being is twice-born, is both born and born again at the same moment; and is, therefore, born a member of the Church; and that Baptism is simply the recognition of these facts. Robertson and Kingsley are his most distinguished disciples. Dr. Halley, whose views on this point Dr. Dale adopts, resorted to this idea as the opposite to the Tractarian tenet of baptismal regeneration, and he connected with it the unscriptural doctrine of indiscriminate Church-membership,—practically the same view as that of Maurice. With Maurice and most of

his followers it is simply a part of their doctrine of Universalism,—the doctrine that the ultimate salvation of every soul is inevitable.\*

The teaching of Drs. Halley and Dale on this great subject must be refused, as degrading what Luther nobly and justly calls “the majesty of Baptism.” It is surely impossible to read the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles, in which Baptism meets us so early, so often, and with such insistence, and is made the basis of such solemn and impressive argument and appeal; and then note the place which Baptism has held in the Church throughout the Christian centuries, from the very first, and yet believe it is only meant to be declaratory of truths which it does not even symbolize.

The importance of Baptism is much more strongly realized on the Mission-field than at home. Major Churchill tells of a “great many natives calling themselves Quakers, to avoid the persecution which always follows upon Baptism” (*Church Ordinances*). Thus many residents in a foreign country refuse to be naturalized to avoid the conscription. The very fact that our Lord’s own forerunner was distinguished by the name of the Baptist points to the great importance and significance of the rite.

Baptism is by our Lord, in His very commission to His Church to baptize, as indissolubly connected with missionary preaching as with Christian education, training, and discipline. And Christ’s presence is distinctly guaranteed at Baptism: “Go ye, therefore, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them, and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Assuredly the baptized is received

\* The self-contradictoriness and unscripturalness of the teaching of Mr. Maurice, as set forth in his *Kingdom of God*, etc., cannot be concealed by his ingenuity of expression and plausibility of putting. Affirming stoutly that every human being is born regenerate, that every one born of woman is also born of God, he none the less contends vehemently for baptismal regeneration; and that as a verifiable fact. But in order to make this out, he gives the name of “regeneration” to experiences which are not only common to all evangelized children, baptized or unbaptized, but common to the converted and the unconverted, common to Noah and to “the world of the ungodly” which perished in the flood. All “strivings of the Spirit,” whether resisted or complied with, he claims as proofs of regeneration. So chaotic were his views that, with all his wondrous wealth of words and command of lucid language, he could not enable his acutest friends—Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Kingsley, for example—to make out his real meaning. Maurice incessantly shifted his position according to the defensive exigencies of his argument; at one time asserting that Baptism imparts regeneration and adoption, and at another, that it simply affirms a man to be in a certain state. Yet Maurice is perfectly scriptural in declaring that the fatal “sin of men consists in their voluntarily refusing the blessings of God’s covenant” (*Kingdom of Christ*, p. 236). Thus he holds in one hand the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and in the other that merely declaratory or “coronation theory” of Baptism, and dexterously changes hands at every turn of the discussion.

into a relation of especial nearness, dearness, and tenderness towards the Church, and also towards the three Persons of the blessed Trinity into Whose Name he is baptized.\*

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## CHAPTER VII.

### THE LORD'S SUPPER.

#### What is the Lord's Supper?

(1) Its fundamental idea is that of a **memorial meal** in celebration of the great fact on which the Church is founded. This our Blessed Lord made prominent at its institution. "The Lord Jesus, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, This is My body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of Me. In like manner also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood: this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. xi. 23-26 [R.V.]). And the death of Christ was not only the death of our dearest Friend and Brother, but the death of our Substitute also. The Lord's Supper keeps for ever fresh the memory of that death.

This solemnity, like Baptism, was instituted, not by the Church, but by its Founder Himself, and, therefore, is most affectingly binding on every one of His followers. The tenderness and solemnity of its associations, "in the night in which He was betrayed;" its deep and vital significance as interpreted by Himself; the grand and awful facts which it commemorates, give it a commanding claim on the observance of His disciples. It is "a perpetual memory," not only of His death, but of the awful and most touching circumstances and incidents of His death, being a kind of repetition of His own Last Supper with His disciples before He suffered.

(2) Thus it is more than a memorial meal; it is a **Monumental Institution**. "In remembrance of Me." This brings Christ close up to our heart's memory in His wondrous Personality; in His endearing and ennobling relationship to us as the voluntary Partaker with us of flesh and blood; in all His love, His holiness, His sufferings, His

\* As to the rejection of the two Sacraments altogether by the Society of Friends, it is only necessary to say that the earliest instance of the rejection of either that can be found is that by a woman in the third century, against whom Tertullian wrote his treatise on Baptism (see *Early Church History*, by Backhouse and Tylor, p. 127).

suretiship, as our redeeming<sup>g</sup> Kinsman, His atoning death in our stead, His rising again "for our justification," His enthroned Mediatorship, His faithful promise to "come again" and receive us to Himself: "Whom having not seen we love; in Whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter i. 8). We are present with Him in the upper room on the night of His betrayal. It is from His hands that we take the broken bread and the cup which He has consecrated. We sup with Him, and He with us. We see Him in His homeliest aspect and His most confidential intimacy, not on the Mount of Transfiguration, not walking on the waves of the wind-swept lake, not expelling devils, not fasting in the wilderness, but reclining at the social board. "Have we not eaten and drunk in Thy presence?" It is still the **Lord's Supper**, "the Table of the Lord," "the breaking of bread" with Him. "The Lord's Supper" is the scriptural designation of the solemnity (1 Cor. xi. 20).

(3) The Lord's Supper is simply, intelligibly, and vividly **symbolic**, and profoundly **significant**. "This is My body," "This is My blood." Its significance was at once indicated and intensified by its institution at the Feast of the Passover, and on the eve of our Lord's death, when "Christ, our Passover," was "sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7).

(4) The Passover meal was a **Sacrificial Feast**, a feast upon a **Sacrifice**, that Sacrifice being the unblemished Paschal lamb, the acknowledged type of "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." There was this important difference, however: The Passover was an annual solemnity, held on one particular day only; the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated "**oft**," but the times when are left to the judgment and feeling of the disciples. No wonder that, at the first, the disciples seem to have solemnized it daily. After a while it became a weekly solemnity.

The minutest details were laid down as to the manner of celebrating the Passover. No such injunctions are given as to the Lord's Supper, excepting the taking in the hand and the eating and drinking of the symbolic elements, bread and wine, with thanksgiving, and the privilege and duty of every disciple to partake of both elements, and the mental and moral conditions and accompaniments of the service. These conditions are urgently insisted on, and the attention is concentrated on them.

The Lord's Supper is thus seen to be much more than the festive meal of the members of the Christian Brotherhood, the Christian

club-feast, as the author of *Ecce Homo* so flippantly calls it. The fact that it is a feast upon the sacrifice of Christ is strongly set forth by St. Paul in his exposition of the Lord's Supper: "Behold Israel after the flesh. Are not they which eat of the sacrifice partakers of the altar?" (1 Cor. x. 18). In the ancient temple, after the offering had been consecrated by burning a portion of it on the altar, and another portion had been set apart for the priests, the remainder was eaten by the offerers in the courts of the Lord's house. Thus the same sacrifice which fed the altar flame also fed the offerers. The offerer himself became an altar. Along with the altar they were sharers of the sacrifice. Moreover, the whole sacrifice had been first laid upon the altar; the portion eaten by the offerer along with that consumed by fire. It is on Christ as "our Passover sacrificed for us" that we feed in the Supper: not only Christ incarnate, but "Him crucified." The broken bread sets forth His **broken body**; the poured-out wine His poured-out blood. "We do show the Lord's **death**" (1 Cor. xi. 26). As He said: "The bread which I give is My flesh, for the life of the world." The risen Lord is still, as on the day of His resurrection, the fourth day after the institution of the Supper, present in order to be manifested to each little company of His disciples, as to the two at Emmaus, "in the breaking of the bread."

In "feeding on Christ in our heart by faith with thanksgiving," we come into the closest and holiest communion with Christ Himself. This, too, is vividly and impressively set forth by St. Paul: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. And I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils" (1 Cor. x. 20, 21). Here again we are distinctly taught that the Lord's Supper is a feast upon a sacrifice, which brings us into intimate communion with the Lord Himself. Even the heathen sacrificial feasts had a ghastly spiritualistic significance. The offerers not only wished to appease the evil spirits whom their idols represented, and to whom their sacrifices were really offered; they also sought, by themselves feasting on the sacrifices they offered, to come into contact and communion with those potent and unholy spirits. The wine, part of which was poured out to regale the demon with its odour and its essence, and the rest drunk by his worshippers, was, in spirit and intention, not only drunk to, but also with, the demon (Deut. xxxii. 17; Psalm cvi. 37, xvi. 4). That this devil-worship was, to all spiritual intents and purposes, devil-fellowship and familiarity is certain from the Scriptures. The worshippers

aimed at intercourse with "familiar spirits." The idol feasts were sacraments of "spiritual wickedness"; the **mysteries of iniquity**, the **arcana** of the wisdom which cometh from beneath, which is "earthly, sensual, and devilish." Thus "idolatry" and "witchcraft" were vitally akin. The "cup of devils" was the cup of "damnation;" as "the cup of the Lord" is "the cup of salvation." That saturated the soul with evil; this satisfies with God's mercy and favour, **and fills with the Spirit.**

The Lord's Supper is thus not only brought into comparison with the sacred temple-feasts of the Old Covenant, but also into contrast with the revelry of the ghastly guilds of heathen devotees.

(5) The Lord's Supper is essentially a **reunion** of Christ with His people, and of Christ's people with each other. The two aspects of the Supper—the intimate, fraternal, festal communion between Christ and His people in a service of thanksgiving—are beautifully set forth in the twenty-second Psalm, which even Strauss recognizes as a programme of the crucifixion, beginning: "My God, my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?" In the twenty-second verse, as quoted in Heb. ii. 12, the risen Saviour says: "I will declare Thy name unto **My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee.**" And then in ver. 26: "**The meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek Him: your heart shall live for ever.**" And then comes the glorious anticipation of a literally oecumenical Communion service: "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn to the Lord." Christ lives not only in the memory of His people, and in the past history of His Church; He is "in the midst of the Church," in its Eucharistic assemblings, and in its gatherings for prayer, fellowship, or discipline.

Thus, as by the initiatory rite we "were all baptized into one body," so, by "the communion of the blood of Christ," "we are all made to drink of one spirit," which makes the body an animated body. This truth the Apostle lingers upon lovingly, and unfolds beautifully. The Lord's Supper not only symbolizes, it should also nourish the instinct of kindness and loving sympathy among believers, since in it we "come together" as one family.

(6) The Lord's Supper does more than symbolize—it **represents, proclaims, preaches**; the broken bread **shows forth** His pierced side and heart; the poured-out wine His poured-out blood. Through these emblems we look mournfully on "**Him Whom**" we "have pierced." We "reach hither" our "hand" and touch the spear-scar in His side, Who "was wounded for our transgressions and

bruised for our iniquity." We take hold by faith of that body which was first assumed for us by Him, and then "given for" us to a violent, yet voluntary and vicarious death. Thus, by an action which speaks more loudly than words could do, an action more expressive than the highest eloquence, more emphatic than angelic elocution, we proclaim "the Lord's death" as an accomplished fact, and with the "loud voice" of a stillness heard in the highest heaven, we re-echo His "It is finished," and send it onward through the ages.

(7) The Lord's Supper is not only a **Memorial** feast; it is at the same time a Banquet of **Anticipation**. In it we "proclaim the Lord's death, till He come." It is a feast sacred to a memory most precious, endearing, and affecting. It is equally sacred to **hope**—the hope of His return. It prophesies the Second Advent, as it proclaims the First. Whilst in it we realize His real presence, we recognize His bodily absence, and it announces: "He is coming again," "I will not henceforth drink of the fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it new with you," etc. (Matt. xxvi. 29; Mark xiv. 25).

(8) The Lord's Supper is also a **Covenant Feast**. "This is My blood of the **New Covenant**" (Matt. xxvi. 28). The cup is a **Covenant cup**, wherein we and our Blessed Lord **pledge** ourselves to each other. We have thus "**made a Covenant** with" Him "by sacrifice," and thus become His "saints" (Psalm l. 5). The sacrifice on which we feast is the Covenant victim. We "join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant." We are His guests, and He is ours. We meet by appointment. He says to us: "This cup is the new covenant in **My blood**" (Luke xxii. 20). The covenant is sealed and cemented by His precious blood, **shed for us "and for the many for the remission of sins."**

(9) The Lord's Supper requires a sublime though simple **Act of Faith**; appropriating and assimilating faith. In taking the bread and the cup we put forth the hand of accepting, appropriating trust. We take Him into our inmost souls, and feed on Him in "our hearts by faith with thanksgiving."

We not only take Christ's teaching, and all the Spirit's teaching with regard to Him: we grasp Christ Himself. We take Him not only into the hand of faith, but also into the heart of love, so that He becomes part of our soul's substance and life. "**Christ crucified**" is not only our Atonement, Substitute, Surety, Representative, but also the Source and Sustenance of our spiritual life. We feed on Him as the "bread that strengtheneth man's heart," and we quaff His dying, life-giving love as the "wino that maketh glad the heart." We go "in

the strength of" this supernatural repast "to the Mount of God" as giants refreshed. Thus are fulfilled to each believer the words which Christ spoke when an earlier "Passover was at hand," just after the miraculous meal in the desert, when He had announced Himself as "the Bread of Life:" "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 54). "The blood is the life" of the Sacrifice.

"All the guests have had burdens; but by the King's grant  
We left them behind when we came:  
The burden of wealth, and the burden of want,  
And even the burden of shame.

"The burden of life we may find at the gate,  
And carry the burden awhile,  
Yet smaller it's grown on the way that is strait,  
And lighter to lift at the stile."

(10) The Lord's Supper is a solemn Thanksgiving Service. This was so prominent a feature in the view of the early Church as to give it its most frequent name—the **Eucharist**, the **Thanksgiving**. Our Lord, at the institution of the Supper, began by **giving thanks**. This, too, is the sole occasion on which the "Man of sorrows," Who spent a whole night in prayer, is recorded to have "sung a hymn." Hence, praise should still **predominate** in this service, of which singing is an important element. St. Paul describes the cup as "the cup of blessing which we bless" (1 Cor. x. 16), so called because the partaking of it was always accompanied with **thanksgiving**.

(11) The Lord's Supper is the **Communion**, the fellowship of the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor. x. 16). In eating the bread and in drinking the wine we have fellowship with the whole "household of faith," the whole body of believers in both worlds, and that in the holiest, the most vital and uniting manner. We do not **partake** in the sense of taking a part only, for Christ is not divided. Each takes the whole Christ. We are all brought into fellowship with one another by being each brought into fellowship with our crucified and "common Lord." We "all eat the same spiritual meat, and all drink the same spiritual drink" (1 Cor. x. 3, 4). Here, again, the Lord's Supper is seen and felt to be **much more than a mere commemorative feast**. Those who **commu-nicate** experience "the common salvation," and inhale the self-same life in Christ. If the act of reception be an act of **faith**, the thing signified attends the sign. He Who gave Himself for us now gives Himself to us. He is "before" us "evidently set forth crucified among" us.

The words "Communion of the body," "Communion of the blood of Christ," imply that we, **along with all other believing communi-**

cants, have a most inward, conscious, and uniting interest in the blood of Christ. From this St. Paul irresistibly deduces the oneness of the whole body of believing communicants, multitudinous as they are. "Inasmuch as we who are many ('the whole multitude of the disciples') are one bread, one body." In this blessed, vital participation all we who eat the bread become "one bread." No longer what we were, "a handful of corn upon the top of the mountains," or disconnected grains, which a breath may scatter, we have become "one body." "For we all partake of the one bread" (ver. 17). All feeding by faith, in our hearts, upon the one "spiritual meat" (1 Cor. x. 3), "the Bread of Life," Christ Himself, we all become not only like the food on which we all subsist, but all deriving life and supporting life from the One Source, become "one body," one living organism. Thus the Lord's Supper becomes not only a **symposium**, the privileged social banquet of the Christian Society; it is also much more, by reason of, and by virtue of, the vitalizing potency of that which we all eat and drink.

This truth is beautifully brought out in "the earliest Church book," *The Teaching of the Apostles*, in the very first **Order for the Administration of the Lord's Supper**. "As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, and gathered together became one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth" (cap. ix. 4). St. Paul's words are, "We have all partaken out of," parallel with "Of His fulness have all we received" (John i. 16).

For the oneness of the body of Christ is not the less **real** because it is "mystical," that is to say, not cognizable by the human senses or by human science. It is the oneness of a common life, circulating through them all, flowing from one Divine and unexhausted Source. It is the oneness of branches springing from the same root and stem, and drawing thence the same life-sap. The life of each and all "is hid with Christ in God" (Col. iii. 3), but felt and manifested upon earth.

(12) The Lord's Supper is a **Sacrament** in the true sense of the word, wherein the believer and the Saviour **renew their pledge** each to other. If Baptism **commits**, much more does the Supper of the Lord. No sacramental address can be so fitting as the re-reading of our Lord's farewell conversation with His disciples after the institution of the Supper, followed by His priestly prayer. The communicants, in like manner, pledge each other. It is a renewal of "the bond of the Covenant" (Ezek. xx. 37).

(13) The Lord's Supper is the consecration of ourselves and our all to God.

(14) The Lord's Supper is to the believer what the Passover was to the Israelites. "It shall be for a **sign** unto thee" (Exod. xiii. 9), at once a **memento** and a **token**. It awakes the attention, impresses the imagination, stirs the sensibilities, kindles the affections, braces up the will, and trims and replenishes with oil the virgin's "odorous lamp." And all this is rendered effective by the Holy Spirit's might. Surely, the "same night in which He was betrayed" is "a night much to be remembered."

As the old Covenant's chisel kept clear and cut deep the martyrs' names on their otherwise weather-worn, weed-choked mountain gravestones, so the recurring Supper of the Lord renews, and clears, and deepens the "**memory of that precious death till His coming again.**" We go away from the Lord's Table feeling—

"Let all Thy love and all Thy grief  
Graven on my heart for ever be."

Whatever deeper meanings the Lord's Supper may have, it has at least all these.

**Is there, then, in the Lord's Supper a real Presence?**

Yes; most real, and realized; but not **bodily**. To the unbeliever and profane it is a deadly draught; but to the believer it is all that we have said, and more than can be told. The bodily presence is a carnal conception condemned by Christ. But the spiritual presence is most real.

**What really makes the Sacrament efficacious? Is it the orders of the officiating minister, and the words which he pronounces?**

No. It is the **faith** of the communicants, through which the Lord's Supper refreshes the memory of Him and of His life and death, **strengthens** the believer "with might" in his "**inner man**" (Eph. iii. 16), revives and cheers his spiritual faintness. For the food of the mind is **truth**, and the heart's aliment is **love**. To the "natural man" the bread is nothing but baken flour, the wine is the "blood of the grape," but to the believer it is Christ's own blood, wherewith His flock was purchased. Every one who knows himself knows how treacherous his memory is apt to be with regard to spiritual facts. Therefore Christ says, "**This do in remembrance of Me.**"

Who does not know the preciousness and potency of the simplest birthday gifts recurring in their season? Who does not know what power there is in a significant token to soothe and to sustain? The poet sighs,

“O that in unfettered union  
 Spirit could with spirit blend !  
 O that in unseen communion  
 Thought could **hold** the distant friend !”

In the Lord's Supper this is accomplished with regard to our “Saviour, Brother, Friend.” By the Spirit's might we are in the sacred Supper so “joined unto the Lord” as to be “one spirit.”

Christ was present with His disciples before and after as well as during the Supper ; but He was “**very present**” there, more intimately, tenderly, vividly, affectingly, endearingly, and unitingly. This is quaintly yet most powerfully put by Bruce, a Scotch preacher in the time of Mary Queen of Scots :—“Thou gets a **better grip** of the same thing in the Sacrament nor (than) thou gat by the hearing of the Word. By the Sacrament the bounds of my soul is enlarged, and quahere (where) I had but a little grip of Christ before, as it were betwixt my finger and my thumb, now I get Him in my hail (whole) hand ; and aye the mair (more) that my faith grows, the better grip I get of Christ.”

#### Who have a “right to eat” of the Lord's Supper ?

The Lord's disciples ; and no others. This limitation was made by our Lord on the occasion of the institution of the Supper. He said : “Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with **My disciples** ?” (Mark xiv. 14). The Lord's Supper must surely be to the full as privileged and exclusive a solemnity as the Passover which it supersedes, of which it is said, “**There shall no stranger eat thereof**” (Exod. xii. 43). But since the Lord's Supper is the most intimate, sacred, and privileged service of His Church, no one who may not be admitted to membership in His Church may be allowed to partake of that sacred meal. It is the Family Meal of “the Household of Faith.” Hence, at first the Lovefeast and the Communion were celebrated at the same time, the latter being the culmination of the former. But, in the course of centuries, the ecclesiastical and liturgical elements thrust out the social element. The Lovefeast was first detached from the **Communion**, then discouraged, and at last forbidden. A true penitent is a disciple.

But do not some maintain that no one has a right to refuse the Lord's Supper even to an open assailant of the Godhead and Atonement of Christ ?

Yes ; but what an affront to Him Who instituted the Supper ! And

what a mockery it makes of the service! What bravado it seems on the part of one who even "denies the Lord that bought him" to ask admission to a solemnity the very significance of which he denies! Yet we, too, have heard it maintained that, as Judas was present at the institution of the solemnity, so no one has any right to exclude any one, even though as bad as Judas himself.

There is no proof whatever that Judas partook of the bread and wine, which was administered "after supper." But it is quite certain that Judas never partook of it after his betrayal of his Lord. The antitype is not less holy than the type. Hence the necessity of what is called in Scotland the "fencing of the Table." There must be, in the first place, self-scrutiny. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup" (2 Cor. xiii. 5). There must also be Church-guards.

### **But is it possible to prevent improper persons from attending the Lord's Supper?**

Not in every instance. It is impossible to know the state of every one's heart. Every one who is fit to be a member of the Church is fit to take the Supper. But surely, this is a reason for all the greater care in the admission and retention of Church-members. A person who is known to be living unchristianly, should not receive the Church's authorization to attend.\*

The Lord's Supper is essentially a part of Church life. Those who are not members of the Church have nothing to do at the Lord's Supper. A profession belied by practice constitutes no claim to be a communicant. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Tim. iii. 5).

### **What are the points on which an intending communicant should examine himself?**

These are indicated by St. Paul: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith . . . Know ye not . . . that Jesus Christ is in you" (2 Cor. xiii. 5).

\* This is illustrated by the acute reply of Henry Moore to Mr. Wesley. Moore entered the vestry as Wesley was giving a note of admittance to the Lord's Supper to a person whom Moore knew to be disreputable. He exclaimed, "If that person is allowed to be present at the Sacrament, I shall not be." "O Henry," replied Wesley, "you should partake if the devil himself were there." "Yes, Sir," said Moore, "but not if Mr. Wesley gave him a note of admittance."

### What is the best mode of solemnizing the Lord's Supper ?

That which best represents the meaning of the service, and is most conducive to the ends for which the Lord's Supper was instituted. But if the mode at present in use in one's own section of the Church be, as a matter of experience, found to set forth the meaning and effect the design of the Supper, it should not be lightly interfered with.

### What is the best time for the solemnity ?

The evening is clearly the most suitable and natural, if equally convenient to the communicants. But the best time for each local Church is that at which the largest and most frequent attendance of its members can be secured. The High Church notion of eating the Supper fasting is, like the kindred superstitions of that school, a wanton and wayward divergence from Scripture and primitive usage. In its original institution, and by the usage of the Apostolic Church, it was connected with the evening meal.

It is obvious that the unscriptural errors on the subject of the Lord's Supper are closely akin to those on Baptism.

And the like confusion of tongues has come upon those who de-spiritualize the Lord's Supper that has smitten those who attribute saving efficacy to Baptism apart from the recipient's faith. The degrading materialism and profane proclivities of the current ritualistic conceptions of the Lord's Supper may be seen from the *Anglican Directory*, with the alleged view of promoting reverence in its celebration. Both Romanists and Ritualists, on the Lord's Supper descend to details which are simply disgusting in their minuteness ; as to what is to be done in the event of " a mouse or other animal devouring the Sacrament," and as to the priest's scotching or " licking up with the tongue " if " the blood be spilled."

### Are Baptism and the Lord's Supper ever coupled together and placed on the same level in the New Testament ?

They are, very strikingly, in 1 Cor. xii. 13 : " For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body and have been all made to drink into one Spirit " : " And were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea ; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink " (1 Cor. x. 2, 3).

### What is the meaning of the word " Sacrament " ?

Its original, its root-meaning, is : 1. A sacred thing. 2. A sacredly confidential communication between intimate friends. 3. A privileged rite. 4. A soldier's oath. To call a ceremony to which people may be indiscriminately admitted a **Sacrament**, is to trifle with the term.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### OF COLLATERAL OR EXTRAORDINARY CHURCH OFFICERS, AND MEANS OF GRACE.

**What other arrangements were made in the primitive Church for Worship, Instruction, Evangelization, Mutual Edification, and for Regulation and Administration ?**

The Apostles were the sole sources of authoritative teaching, but each of the one hundred and twenty original members spoke to the rest for edification, and to the public for evangelization. This every subsequent convert was allowed to do, and expected to do, under the necessary restrictions, and as occasion served. As to worship, the believers still attended with religious regularity the devotional services of the temple ; but they also had their own gatherings for prayer, religious intercourse, and partaking of the Lord's Supper in private houses, according to convenience ; and they took advantage of the facilities for conversing in groups afforded by the public promenade called Solomon's Porch.

The Apostles, as we have seen, very soon devolved their financial responsibilities upon and shared their functions of oversight with officers approved by the people, but solemnly appointed by the Apostles themselves.

**How does it appear that the Church of Pentecost had at Jerusalem more meeting-places than one ?**

(1) It is expressly and repeatedly stated that they held these gatherings "from house to house," and that they met for prayer in a private house (Acts ii. 46, v. 26, xii. 12). (2) Their numbers, even when reduced to a minimum for the convenience of a theory, were immensely too large to admit of their stately holding their privileged meetings in any

room or courtyard conceivably available to a persecuted community. (3) They were under no temptation whatever to put themselves to the prodigious inconvenience to which controversial writers have ruthlessly condemned them. Not being trammelled in the least by any theory of Church government, they were at perfect liberty to follow the indications of Providence and the dictates of divinely-guided common sense. Thomas Fuller puts this with his own quaint logic: "The first Christians met in 'an upper room,' for they had no proper places of worship. But it does not follow that we, who have more convenient houses, should do so. The first Christians were exhorted to 'salute one another with a holy kiss;' the reason was, it was the custom in the East for men in general so to express their affection," etc.

**Then was not the Church organized according to any pre-conceived plan?**

Not any plan preconceived by or even revealed to its human organizers. There is not the slightest indication in the New Testament of any such plan; on the contrary, there are striking proofs of its absence. Our Lord Himself, indeed, as we have seen, instituted one office—the Apostolate, and two rites—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He also assumed, rather than commanded, that a faithful, peace-preserving discipline would be maintained in His Church, promising to be present at all its meetings for worship or for discipline, and to give effect alike to its petitions and its disciplinary acts; of course, when prayer and discipline kept within the bounds which He had assigned to both. But modes of worship and the constitution of Church courts He left entirely to the good sense, good feeling, and good taste of His disciples, under the guidance of His ever present Spirit. For in this sphere too, "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. iii. 17).

Accordingly, the Apostles, in their Church arrangements, simply and prayerfully followed the guidance of Providence through the emergence of events. A sound and kindly practical wisdom was to them what Moses' father-in-law was to him,—the suggester of sensible and serviceable expedients to meet emergencies, and to forestal complications and confusions. It was in this way, as we have seen, that there arose first officers of finance (Acts vi. 3, etc.), and then of pastoral teaching and oversight. It is instructive that we find no account of the original institution of the later and more important office in Jerusalem, but come upon it incidentally, as a recognized and

influential body, in association with—not in succession to—the Apostles.

In the constitution of the Gentile Churches, however, we find that the first step was the ordaining elders in every place.

Are there, then, no firm principles of Church government, nor any guiding precedents supplied to us in the New Testament?

We have everything in this respect, as in all others, that could be of real and permanent use. Nothing can be plainer than that it is the will of the Church's Founder and Head, that His Church should be a well-ordered, and, therefore, a well-ruled and well-officered, law-abiding community. And we have seen that two classes of officers come into the clearest view as an essential part of all Church-structure: "Elders" or "Bishops," that is, **Overseers**; and **Deacons** or **Stewards**—officers of finance.

Besides, it is not at all difficult to obtain a clear, instructive, and most beautiful view of the first-formed Christian Church. It was a **multitudinous** community, consisting of "many thousands," far more, as we have seen, than could possibly hold their privileged meetings in any room, courtyard, or "void" place in Jerusalem which could be available to a proscribed people. They met where and as best they could, without troubling themselves about future schemes and theories of Church government. But they were clearly all under a common pastorate,—that of "the Apostles and Elders;" and they, consciously to themselves and conspicuously to others, formed one undivided Church.

Since the original framework of the Church was so pliant and expansive, is there no true ideal of Church government towards which the Churches may work, as well as limits within which this freedom and flexibility of organization must move?

Assuredly there is a true idea of Church government, of which no Church should ever lose sight; and there is in the New Testament a firm outline of Church government distinctly traceable, which no Church can blamelessly or harmlessly ignore. Yet in working towards the true idea of Church government from different points of view, and under different historical conditions, there may be various modifications, in this or that direction, of the general Church type. But it is

wrong to suppose that the perfect Church idea was at the first, and has been from the first, embodied in any one and only one actually existing form. In the Apostles' view the perfect Church was, not the primitive Church, the Church of apostolic times, but was to be looked for in the Church of the ultimate future. The various Churches must learn of each other, for we all have something to learn, and each has something to teach, "that the fellowship of" our "faith may become effectual in the knowledge of every good thing which is in" any one of us "in Christ" (Philem. 6); "till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13). The Roman Catholic and High Church dogma which unchurches the whole world-wide Christian discipleship which has not "three orders," and does not pretend to a traceable official descent from the Apostles, is as unscriptural as it is unhistoric and ignoble.

#### **Is Denominationalism necessarily Sectarianism ?**

No. This question is equivalent to the asking whether any Christian community can be at the same time a Denomination and a Church.

**Am I to understand that the origin of office and government in the Church is, in the first place, the declared and recorded will of the Divine Founder of the Church that there shall be in His Church both government and office; and His appointment of the Apostles as the source of office and authority ?**

That is the case.

**Do we not find in the New Testament other officers besides Apostles, Elders or Bishops, and Deacons ?**

Yes; we find, in addition to the Twelve, a secondary order of "apostles." We also find: "evangelists," "prophets," "teachers," "pastors," "gifts of healings," "helps," and "governments" (1 Cor. xii. 28). But all these were evidently not, like the Elders or teaching and ruling officers, and the Deacons or officers of finance, absolutely essential to Church organization, although they were richly and wonderfully helpful in the carrying out of the Church's mission.

**What was the special province, and what were the duties of these variously designated officers or agents? First, what were the Apostles who were not of "the Twelve" ?**

They bore the same name as that chosen for the Twelve by Christ

Himself, because they showed the special characteristic which rendered that designation the most appropriate—that which, as we have seen, the word **Apostle** indicates: One sent forth on a **special mission**. This grand name **Apostle** belongs in common to our Blessed Lord Himself, Who is “the Apostle” as well as the “High Priest of our profession;” to ministering angels, who are so designated in Heb. i. 14; and to every Christian **missionary sent forth** to an unevangelized people. Our Lord often spoke of Himself as “sent forth.” The word **Apostle** is, in the first instance, an adjective, meaning simply **sent forth** or **from**. As a substantive it bears the meaning, **One who is sent forth** or **sent from**, as we find in John xiii. 16: “Neither he that is sent” (literally, an apostle) “greater than he that sent him.” This constituted the special suitability of the word as the title of the Twelve who were to be Christ’s “witnesses to the end of the earth.” And every Gospel missionary to an unevangelized people is a true successor of the Apostles in this important and peculiar respect. Hence St. Paul’s special anxiety to preach Christ “not where Christ was named” (Rom. xv. 20), and his feeling of responsibility with regard to the whole human race. Hence, too, no man whose duties confine him to a restricted area can, with any pretence to scholarship, affect to be a successor of the Apostles. An Apostle must have a commission, if not a world-wide yet at least “a roving commission,” an itinerant ministry. This is the only sense that covers all the uses of the word throughout the New Testament. Thus St. Paul states the purpose of “Apostleship” to be “for obedience to the faith among all nations” (Rom. i. 5). The verb to which “apostle” is first adjective, then substantive, means to despatch, as a courier on an urgent, special errand.

The original and inclusive meaning of the word is strikingly illustrated by the fact that in Acts xiv. 14 “Barnabas and Paul” are conjointly called apostles, the name of the older being put first. Here the word is equivalent to our modern word **missionaries**, as it expresses the fact that they were especially “sent away” by the Church at Antioch (Acts xiii. 3) as **missionaries** to unevangelized peoples. Sometimes the word bears the kindred meaning **delegate**, representative. Thus St. Paul, in answer to the anticipated question, In what **capacity** do Titus and his colleagues come to Corinth? answers: “Whether any inquire about Titus or our brethren, they are the **apostles** (English Bible, ‘messengers’) of the Churches” (2 Cor. viii. 23), meaning plainly that they did not come in any private capacity, as if self-sent, but on **special Church business**. In like manner, St. Paul

(Phil. ii. 25) names Epaphroditus the "apostle" (English Bible, "messenger") of the Philippian Church to him. Again, in Rom. xvi. 7, "Andronicus and Junias" are said to be "of note among the apostles." And when, in 1 Cor. xii. 28, and in Eph. iv 11, St. Paul specifies the various gifts and grades of Church workers, and gives the first rank to Apostles, it may be argued that he includes under that name, not only the primal, but also the sub-apostolate. The word "set"—"He set in the Church," *i.e.*, **settled, fixed, established**—certainly seems to indicate a permanent, and not merely primitive class of Church workers. But this does not decide the question, since, as we have seen, the chief work of the Twelve remains to the end of time in the Church which they founded: namely, in their recorded "Acts," and their inspired writings.

This, then, would assign to pioneer missionaries the honour of being the truest successors of the Apostles, and gives them the highest rank in the Christian Church.

The recently discovered *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* shows that "apostles" continued to be a recognized class of Church workers, if not an order of Church officers; for the two ideas must be distinguished by us, as they were in the primitive Church and in the age immediately succeeding that of the Twelve Apostles. In chapter xi., 3, etc., of that most instructive book, "apostles" are assumed to be a permanent agency in the Church of Christ, to whom the direction given by our Lord to "the Twelve" and "the Seventy" in common are taken to apply. And here the word clearly means **an itinerant preacher of the Gospel**, or evangelist, in the modern sense of that word.

Another book, also belonging to the age next to that of the Twelve Apostles, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, also uses the word "apostles" in this comprehensive sense; and the heathen writer Lucian likewise mentioned this same class of Christian travelling preachers.

The lamented Bishop Hannington, the Free Methodist missionary Haughton, and the Wesleyan Methodist missionary martyrs, were alike clearly "apostles" in this secondary, but yet grand and strictly scriptural sense.

### Who were the "Prophets" of the New Testament?

The New Testament Prophets held the like place in the Christian Church to that which was held in the Jewish Church by those who bore the same name. Eldad and Medad, when they "prophesied in the camp" (Num. xi. 27), may be taken as representatives of this

order. A prophet under either Testament might or might not occasionally foretell future events which lay beyond the range of the highest human sagacity. For the word "prophet" means simply one who speaks as God's spokesman.

The Prophet also made manifest "the secrets of" men's "hearts" (1 Cor. xiv. 25). A prophet is one who speaks under the immediate and direct influence or *afflatus* (breathing on) of the Holy Spirit, in a peculiarly elevated state of mind, and in a manner, and with an effect, to which he is altogether unequal without such an *afflatus*. This St. Paul sets forth as the most to be "coveted," because the most "fruitful," of all the grace-gifts which Christ has bestowed upon His Church (1 Cor. xii. 31 and xiv. 1). This most precious gift of grace was bestowed upon and exercised by either sex indifferently: it was far too precious not to be exercised by every one on whom it was bestowed, "sons and daughters," "servants and handmaids"—Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Hulda, and Anna, under the Old Dispensation; the women as well as the men in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost; and on the "four daughters" of Philip, the evangelist. "Praying" and "prophesying" were both allowed to women under certain seemly restrictions; one of which was the having the head veiled.

The Prophets not only came next to the Apostles, but were even associated or bracketed along with them as co-founders of the Church, which was "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets" (Eph. ii. 20). The gift consisted in a clearer, more profound, and more vivid insight into "the deep things of God" as revealed in Holy Scripture; a more searching and quickening power over the minds and hearts of those who listened; and a wonderful outflow of impassioned eloquence, quite beyond the reach of nature or of art. This gift also continued in sub-apostolic times, as is also seen in the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, and the writings of Justin Martyr and Irenæus. But this gift, like some others, gradually disappeared. Yet many instances of it have occurred in our own times.

This power is not at the command of the speaker, so that he can exercise the gift at will; nor can he reproduce at will the strains which were once poured forth. It is thus plainly distinguishable from any natural oratorical faculty or acquired facility, or inborn and cultivated talent for improvisation. It cannot be calculated upon or be made matter of previous announcement, like a sermon or a speech. All attempts to get it up in any Church, from the Montanists to the Irvingites of our own time, have signally, sometimes disastrously, failed.

In the age immediately following that of the Twelve Apostles, we find the Prophets also holding a recognized position in the Churches (See *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*). They were set apart to their office, and had a right to a stated maintenance. They had special privileges and precedence, of praying or exhorting during the celebration of the Supper. In the earlier Churches this gift was at once the most desired and the most diffused; and the utmost liberty of prophesying obtained. But even St. Paul found it necessary to bring the gift under regulation and restraint.

The fact that the Prophets were relieved from worldly care by maintenance out of the Church-fund proves, that a life devoted to prayer, meditation, and study of the Scriptures was deemed necessary to the preparation of their minds for the *afflatus* of the Holy Ghost. Most modern prophets were most conscientious and enthusiastic readers and thinkers. Like Elijah, they "laid the wood in order" before they invoked the fire. It is hard to imagine a New Testament prophet reading his sermon.

### Who were the Evangelists of the New Testament?

The word *evangelist* means simply **preacher of the Gospel**. The New Testament evangelist was not a local officer. The duties and the **speciality** or distinct activity of the evangelists are indicated by the place they occupy in St. Paul's catalogue in Eph. iv. 11 between Apostles and Prophets on the one hand, and Pastors and Teachers on the other. They are not settled, or in charge of one particular Church, like the Pastors and Teachers; yet their missionary range was not so wide as that of Apostles. Thus, "Philip, the evangelist" is found at Samaria first, then on the desert route to Gaza, then at Azotus, and last of all at Tyre; all of these places being within a comparatively short distance of Jerusalem. They, too, like Apostles, were itinerant Preachers, but their itinerant preaching was not a lifelong avocation, as that of the Apostles was. Philip, for instance, was a Deacon of the Church at Jerusalem. Both Apostles and attendants of Apostles were called, amongst other duties, to "**do the work of an Evangelist**" (2 Tim. iv. 5), *i.e.*, to preach Jesus to the unevangelized, as Philip did to the Ethiopian treasurer. Evangelists, as a distinct class, disappeared from Church history for a time. But the classes overlap each other.

### Who were the Pastors and Teachers?

You are right in joining the two as St. Paul does. They both were

localized Church-workers with spiritual duties ; but in the Pastor, or shepherd, the gift of oversight and provision—shepherding—was prominent ; in the Teacher, the teaching and, of course, the training, educative, catechetical gift predominated. A Teacher differed from a prophet in the calculableness and the continuity of his work. The teaching gift and office were and are of very great importance, since “to make disciples” and “teaching” form so large and prominent a part in the Church’s original and permanent commission.

**What are the “gifts of healing, helps, governments” ?**

**Grace-gifts of healing** were special endowments conferred on believers, by which they were enabled to remove bodily disease. These gifts were widely diffused in the Church, but, as we see from the Acts and the Epistle of James, were possessed by the Apostles and Elders in an eminent degree. The English word which most nearly corresponds to the Greek word rendered “helps” is **resource**, implying a very exceptional and serviceable faculty for meeting an exigency or emergency ; a most necessary gift to the Church, which has a hard work, and an ever-changeful “warfare” to “accomplish.” “Governments” signify the administrative ability and power of persuasion and influence which mark a man out for leadership. The word literally means **steering-skill** or **steersmanship** ; the analogy between steersmanship and statesmanship being obvious, as shown by common modes of expression in the Greek, English, and other languages. Under this head come **tact**, **address**, and, above all, **personal influence**.

The primitive Church seems, then, to have been richly endowed with gifts both spiritual and mental, and to have been very strong in agencies for the carrying out its work ?

Nothing can be more explicit and emphatic than the repeated assertion of the Holy Spirit by St. Paul of the universal **diffusion through the Church** of God-given faculties for mutual edification, or reciprocal upbuilding in their holy faith, for evangelization, for Christian education, and for philanthropic effectiveness. St. Paul strongly insists upon this fact as one grand department and demonstration of the Holy Spirit’s activity in the Church. The Spirit Himself “speaketh expressly” that there is a “manifestation of the Spirit given to **every man to profit withal**,” that “one and the self-same Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will” (1 Cor. xii. 7, 11). The neglect, the “wanton waste” of these divinely distributed endowments on each individual Church-member has entailed on the Church through

the ages "woeful want." Satan has found "some mischief still for idle hands to do," and idle tongues to propagate, even when those hands and tongues had been pledged to the service of God. It is especially clear that the gift of **prophesying**, *i.e.*, speaking on Divine things under Divine influence in an elevated and elevating manner, is far from being an exclusively official gift, or its exercise an exclusively official function. The Church of the present day has no parsimonious endowment of gifts and no contemptible array of auxiliary agencies; witness our Sunday-school teachers, tract distributors, Bible-women, lay missionaries, treasurerships, secretaryships, committees, Dorcas meetings, etc., etc.

**How is it that we do not find the name of either Bishop or Deacon in either of St. Paul's lists—that in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, or that in the Epistle to the Ephesians?**

The reason for this is very simple and significant. St. Paul is not describing Church-officers, but grace-gifts and Church-workers, and the different departments of Church-work. For gifts and work come before office, both as to time and importance. This must be so, inasmuch as, in the first place, both the need and the gift call forth the office itself, as we have seen; and secondly, the office is of no use whatever, but, on the contrary, an encumbrance, unless the holder of the office possess the gifts which qualify for the office, and by the exercise of which the need is met. It was from amongst the possessors of these grace-gifts that Church-officers were chosen. When Peter said with regard to the Diaconate at Jerusalem: "**Look you out** whom we may appoint," indicating at the same time the indispensable prerequisites for the office, he implied that men so qualified were to be found amongst the disciples. The required qualification was already "**known by its fruits.**" Moreover, in the primitive Church "a deacon" was obliged to pass through a period and a process of probation; he must "**first be proved,**" then appointed (1 Tim. iii. 10). A man was also obliged to be a probationer before he could be a bishop.

**We read also, in the Revelation, of "the Angel of the Church" in Ephesus, etc. What was the nature of his office?**

The Angel of a Church was, obviously, its highest officer, in whom all Church rule culminated. He was immediately responsible both to God and man for the maintenance of purity of doctrine and of life within the Church of which he was the Angel. He was the respon-

sible **representative** of the Church, in such wise that the Church, as a living personality, centred in him. It is plain from the Epistles to the seven Churches that before the death of the last surviving Apostle all the Elders, Deacons, and other Church officers of a town or city were, along with the people who might be under their charge, themselves under the superintendence of one Pastor, on whom rested the immediate duty, and on whom was conferred, necessarily, the corresponding **right**, of overseeing the whole Christian community within that area ; which community, as being under one and the same superintendency, constituted one Church. He was the Superintendent or Presiding Elder, or Bishop-Presbyter ; the word Angel, like the word Elder, being borrowed from the Jewish synagogue, though applied to a higher office.

That the Church of Ephesus, for example, did not all worship in one place is as plain as anything can be which is not definitely stated in history, but left to be gathered by the common sense of the unprejudiced reader ; because no other notion could possibly occur to any one who had not some unhistoric theory to support. The Angel of a Church was the recognized and responsible guardian of the doctrine, discipline, and spiritual state of the Christian Community—pastors and all. There is the highest probability that in the Seven Churches of Asia, as in most others, especially in purely voluntary Churches, the character of the people generally was substantially not unlike that of their chief pastor ; by reason of the interaction of mutual influence. “ Like priest, like people,” or “ like people, like priest,” is a two-sided proverb founded on a most extensive historical induction. “ The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means ; and My people love to have it so, and what will ye do in the end thereof ? ” (Jer. v. 29). When the prophets pretend also to be priests, and devote their prophetic action mainly to the crying up of their priestly pretensions ; and, with the true instincts of despotism, give unbounded license to their subjects, on the one condition of submitting to their own authority, and being content with a sort of semi-salvation in sin instead of from sin ; to such priest-prophets the question may well arise, “ **What will ye do in the end thereof ?** ” A Laodicean chief-pastor usually makes a Laodicean people. A hard-working, much-enduring, evil-hating chief-pastor tends to form a hard-working, much-enduring, evil-hating people.

The above supposition exactly accords with the state of things which appears at the very beginning of post-apostolic Church history. In every principal centre—Smyrna, for example—we find that the Church

is governed by a body of Elders under the presidency of one of their own number. Moreover, in the apostolic age, James, "the Lord's brother," certainly held the like position in the Church at Jerusalem.

But these facts give not the slightest countenance to prelacy, or to the exclusive claim of **diocesan** episcopacy to confer ordination on the rest of their brethren. The business of the presiding Elder, who came to be called Bishop, **Overseer**, by way of eminence, is to **take order** for the correction of abuses, the exclusion of false teachers and unholy livers, and for the stirring up of the lukewarm into zeal, and the return to primitive fervour and activity.

Moreover, the responsible authorities of the Roman Empire demanded to know **who** was responsible for the well-conductedness and loyalty of the Christian Society, as of every other Society, in any particular place, for the preservation of the public peace and order, for which they themselves were responsible to the Emperor. It is expressly stated that there were several Elders—Pastors—in one Church; and it was, of course, highly expedient that some **one** of them should be the recognized and responsible president of the Presbytery. This arrangement would be as natural, necessary, and inevitable as the other arrangements of offices. The greater the freedom in a community, and the more absolute the original equality of all, the more urgent the necessity for a recognized superintendency.

But superintendency by no means implies arbitrary rule. The bishop's brother-Elders were not only his consultees, but also his co-assessors; and the bishop could be constitutionally deposed in the event of the Shepherd himself proving a "grievous" wolf, "not sparing the flock," or "speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after" (Acts xx. 30) himself.

The word **Angel**, even when applied to heavenly beings, is a term of office or of errand; not a designation descriptive of nature.

**Were there no other officers required and recognized in the primitive Church, besides those already mentioned?**

We have, in Acts v. 6, a glimpse of a class of officers corresponding to the vergers, sextons, or chapel-keepers of the present day; these were called "the younger men." They performed manual service, as in the interment of Ananias and Sapphira. We find also a very important kind of work performed, of which the namelessness indicates its temporary character. Timothy and Titus acted as representatives of the Apostle Paul, when he was providentially prevented from visiting in person any particular place in which the exercise of his visitatorial

power was needed. They are instructed to ordain bishops and deacons, and to "set in order the things that are wanting" (Tit. i. 5), *i.e.*, to supply defects in the as yet rudimentary organization of some particular Church. Indeed, much in the earliest age of the Church was tentative, and temporary. High Church writers, in their desperate assertion of the Divine right of Diocesan Episcopacy, when driven to confess that bishops and elders were originally the same, have, as a forlorn hope, thrown up as a polemic earthwork the hypothesis that modern Diocesan bishops are the successors of Timothy and Titus. But this assumption has not the faintest support either in Scripture or early Church History. Diocesan Episcopacy grew up, like everything else, naturally, and to meet a felt need. A sensible arrangement was subsequently elevated into a Divine institution without which the Church could have no existence.

**Is it necessary to be able to point to some definite precept or precedent in justification of every Church office or arrangement ?**

No. All that is needed, or can reasonably or scripturally be required, is to be able to show that any particular arrangement, usage, or agency is not at variance with any New Testament precept or principle. It is not only the right, but also the duty, of every Church to make the very best arrangements practicable for accomplishing and securing the purposes for which the Church exists, and for carrying out its arduous and urgent mission. A Church is not so much at liberty as it is under obligation to adjust, and if necessary re-adjust, its organization to its environment, and the changing exigencies of its work and warfare ; under the guidance of experience, of sound sense, and according to the fundamental laws and vital forces of human association. The Churches of the sixteenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, in adapting their arrangements to the existing conditions of British society, have not forsaken, but followed, the example of the apostolic Church in the adjustment of its organization to the conditions of Jewish, Greek, and Roman society in the first century of our era. Since the Church is a living organism, its structure must be determined, first, by the life within it, and, secondly, by its surroundings. In this respect, too, "the life is the light of men." And the life and light of every living Church flows from Christ, its living Head ; and the unction from the Holy One distils upon it.

Nothing can be plainer than that the form which the Church took during the lifetime and under the eye of the Apostles was not shaped on any "pattern showed in the mount," but according

to the simplest dictates of practical good sense, and the best working models of human associations, Jewish, Greek, or Roman.

The non-mention of the origin of the eldership or episcopate, and the fact that diocesan episcopacy is utterly unknown to the New Testament, are fatal to the claim of the Divine right of Diocesan Episcopacy. And, on the other hand, the fact that the bishops or "overseers" were ordained in all the Churches, after a sufficient lapse of time for the developing and discovery of suitable men for the office, shows the necessity for the office in order to secure the well-being and well-working of the Church. To assert, as many writers do, that episcopacy is essential to the very existence of a Church, is ridiculous, since there must first have been a Church to the oversight of which a bishop was elected and appointed.

It is also needful to note that the appointment and ordination of the Elders rested with the Apostles, or, in their unavoidable absence, with some person expressly delegated by them to do their work; that when an eldership or presbytery was once created by Apostles or apostolic men, the admission of a new member was "by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Tim. iv. 14). At the same time, there can be no reasonable doubt that the Elders, like the deacons at Jerusalem, were appointed with the hearty and express concurrence of the local Church from amongst which they were chosen. Indeed, we know from the Epistle of Clement at Rome, written about A. D. 95, that this was the actual rule. We also learn that a wrong-living or wrong-headed pastor might be deposed, the process of deposition being so well known that Clement does not need to indicate it. In fact, the **processes** of Church discipline, whether as to pastors or private members, are nowhere detailed either in the New Testament or the earliest Church literature. All we know is that the chief pastor or "Angel" of a Church was responsible for seeing discipline properly carried out, yet that he had not the absolute personal power of inflicting Church penalties, but that disciplinary action was taken by the Church.

The fact, again, that in Jerusalem the appointment of deacons was earlier than that of elders, and elsewhere that of elders before that of deacons, is one of many proofs that Church proceedings were not carried on after a rigid model.

The attempt or pretension of the Irvingites and others to slavishly shape the Church of to-day according to the imperfect outline of the Church at Jerusalem or at Ephesus in the first century, and all violent and divisive agitations within Churches to conform

arrangements to some special model, arise from an unpractical misconception. The primitive Church did not pretend to perfection or finality of external arrangement, or to be the Model Church for all peoples throughout all ages. Absolute **uniformity** would be fatal to **universality**. Hence the New Testament, as to externals, gives **principles**, not **prescriptions**. Moreover, the **perfection** of the Church is represented as something to be **grown towards**, and as consisting, not in form, but in the attainment of a full-grown likeness to Christ. The apostolic age was, and was pronounced to be, the childhood of the Church, as to experience at least as much as in simplicity.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### OF BINDING AND LOOSING, OR "THE POWER OF THE KEYS."

**What is the power of Binding and Loosing conferred by our Lord on "the Church"?**

It was plainly something which St. Peter had in common with his brother Apostles, and which they held in common with every local Church court, even if consisting of but "two or three gathered together" in Christ's name (Matt. xviii. 20). With this is associated the power to remit or retain sins. The **binding** and loosing refer mainly to "things;" the remitting or retaining sins must, of course, refer to persons. The meaning which the word "**bind**" must have borne to the minds of the disciples in this connection may be gathered from our Lord's description of the authority of the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat "in Moses' seat:" that is to say, were the recognized religious teachers of the time, and spoke, not like Christ, "as one having authority"—that is, the personal right to **lay down** law—but only entitled to interpret the law which God had already laid down by the mouth of Moses; whose seat they occupied, not as legislators, like him or like the Christ, but, on the contrary, as simple expositors of his directions. Of these Scribes and Pharisees our Lord says, "They **bind** heavy burdens." Now, our Lord guarantees to His Church a power to which the Scribes and Pharisees could make no pretension, namely, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 18), that is to say, as we have seen, that their

decisions in Christ's name, in His presence, when made in accordance with His revealed will, should be approved of, authenticated, counter-signed, and rendered effective by the enthroned Head of the Church Himself.

This, of course, implied a guarantee of Divine guidance to a right decision ; but, of course also, only so long as they dutifully observed, and kept well within, the limits of their Lord's revealed will in His written word. The Divine approval and effectual carrying out of Church decision depends, as we have seen already, upon the same conditions, and is subject to the same limitations, as the approving and answering of the prayers of God's assembled people. It is plain from the very terms of the original promise (in Matt. xviii.), that the meeting for prayer and the meeting for the exercise of Church discipline are in this respect on the same plane. "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Now, no one could suppose that God would approve and answer a wicked prayer, or a prayer for a forbidden or mischievous thing. In like manner, no one can reasonably or Christianly imagine that our "Father in heaven" can possibly approve, much less lend His omnipotence to carry into effect, a Church decision which was at variance with, and even did violence to, His own revealed and recorded will ; such as the expelling a member of His Church for dutifully believing what He Himself has plainly taught, or for doing what He has expressly commanded, or for refusing to believe what is clearly contrary to His word, or to do what that word explicitly forbids. **"If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us ; and if we know that He hear us, we have the petitions that we desired of Him"** (1 John v. 14, 15). **"If we ask anything according to His will."** This limiting condition, the Apostle John saw clearly, was included in the promise which he had heard from the Master's own lips. And this apostolic comment, of course, involves its converse. **If we ask what He has forbidden us to even desire, we know that, through His mercy, we shall not "have the petitions that we ask of Him."** St. John could not forget that the Master had not granted, but pityingly rebuked the ambitious petition which he and his brother James and their doting mother had asked of Him.

Divine guidance is promised alike to the individual believer and the Church on certain clear and express conditions, such as these : "The

meeke will He guide in judgment" (Psalm xxv. 9). "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light" (Matt. vi. 22). A Church court composed of proud, obstinate ecclesiastics, or a self-confident, headstrong popular gathering bent upon a foregone conclusion, will pray in vain for Divine guidance. A Church court which allows itself to look at anything but the glory of God, and the will of God declared in His Word, or "assuredly gathered" from His Providence, will be "full of darkness."

Still further, the prevalence of prayer is not more closely connected with the true godliness of the petitioner than is the Divine authentication and effectuation of ecclesiastical decisions. This was secretly felt by "the Jews" when the man born blind fixed upon his questioners the convicting gaze of his newly-opened eyes, and said, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth." "If this man were not of God, He could do nothing" (John ix. 30, 33). They felt that this was a shrewd impeachment of their own judicial competence, and answered, "Dost thou teach us! And they cast him out"—"out of the synagogue," and out of their presence. But "Jesus found him" (ver. 35), and acknowledged him; as He does every one of His members who has been "cast out" "for righteousness' sake" and for speaking the truth. As it is "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man" that "availeth much," so it is the devout decision of a righteous court that "availeth much" in the kingdom of God.

It must not be lost sight of that the New Testament is written in a language foreign to us, not only in its words, but also in its idioms or peculiarities of expression. Thus the words "bind" and "loose" bore, to the disciples, a meaning neither questionable nor far to seek. And the Old Testament idioms and modes of speech are carried forward into the New. Now, in the Old Testament those who bore a message from God, the fulfilment of which proved its Divine origin, were spoken of as the actual doers of that which they foretold. Thus Pharaoh's chief butler in narrating Joseph's interpretation of his dream and that of the chief baker, says, "And it came to pass, as he interpreted it to us, so it was: me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged" (Gen. xli. 13). In like manner Balak, perceiving that Balaam's predictions invariably came true, says, "I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed" (Num. xxii. 6). Hence he foolishly concluded that Balaam had an unlimited discretion of blessing or cursing whom he would. But

Balaam, with all his faults, had too much regard for the permanence of his own reputation, if with no higher consideration, to allow Balak to fall into this error. He answers, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, **I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more**" (18). Thus also it is said of Samuel, "The Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord" (1 Sam. iii. 19, 20),—knew by the invariable fulfilment of his predictions.

In like manner, God says to the timid and tearful Jeremiah : "See, I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy" (Jer. i. 10). "Thou art My battle-axe and weapons of war ; for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider ; with thee also will I break in pieces man and woman" (Jer. xxxi. 20). And so Hosea : "I have hewed them by the prophets ; I have slain them by the words of My mouth" (Hos. vi. 5).

The Apostles, in like manner, and the rest of the disciples, could not but know perfectly well that, in their pronouncements as in their prayers, they were strictly limited by the word of God, so that they could "not go beyond" it, "to do less or more." They knew that their words could carry no **doing-power** if they stopped short of, or went beyond, the word of God, "less or more." The ass-rebuked prophet himself rebukes the madness of the priests, who venture to "go beyond the word of God, less or more." The practice and the experience of the Apostles correspond to that of the older prophets. Throughout the New Testament we find no hint that any one of the Apostles assumed to pronounce the personal pardon of any individual in the direct and positive manner in which our Lord Himself said to the paralytic, "Thy sins are forgiven thee ;" and to the woman who had been a sinner, "Thy faith hath saved thee." St. John, indeed, does affirm of all young believers as a class, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you ;" but no Apostle ever dared to do what those who claim to be the successors of the Apostles do not shrink from pretending to do, namely, to say, "**I absolve thee.**"

What the Apostles had both the right and the power to do was grand enough for any mortal man, namely, to give forth the **authoritative proclamation** of pardon to every believing penitent, and that without exception, hesitation, reservation, or delay. And their pro-

clamation, as a matter of fact, always took effect. As saith St. Paul, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power. For the kingdom of God is not in word (in mere theory or pretension), but in power" (1 Cor. iv. 20). And **this** glorious right and power was not confined to the Apostles ; it did not die with them, **nor was it bequeathed** by them to any particular class or order. It belongs to the Christian preacher in every age ; and **not to preachers only**, but to every true believer.

When Paul so "reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come" that "Felix trembled," then Christ's "ambassador in bonds" **bound** the unrighteous judge. And the right and power to "bind" the impenitent and unbelieving, and to loose the penitent believer, belongs to "the Church" of Christ this day, and is the prerogative of "all His saints." Every faithful witness for Christ can load the sinner's conscience with chains which, as Byron said from his own experience, "crush though they clank not." And it is the commission of every true evangelist "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound, to set at liberty those that are bruised" (Luke iv. 18, 19). And how many a poor penitent whose bondage priestly absolution had no power to break, has "found liberty" whilst listening to the simplest proclamation of Gospel grace,—coming, "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. i. 8).

The Church of Christ has also power, in its duly constituted courts, to condemn and exclude an offending and unrepenting member, and to forgive and reinstate a penitent backslider ; as the Church in Corinth did at the instance of St. Paul.

Several passages in the Epistles to the Corinthians cast strong light upon this question. Tidings reach St. Paul of a grossly immoral act committed by a member of the Corinthian Church, and that no disciplinary action had been taken on the case. St. Paul severely censures the Church for not having mournfully "put away" from "the midst of" them "that wicked person" (1 Cor. v. 13). This proves that the permitting any one who is known to be indulging an immoral habit to retain membership in a Church is a disgraceful dereliction of duty, which renders the rest of the Church accomplices in the sin, though "after the fact." St. Paul then declares : "I, for one, as absent in body, but present in spirit, already have judged, as being present, him who has wrought this folly." But this express apostolic condemnation was not enough. St. Paul insists that there must be solemn Church action on the matter. The apostolic judgment must

be followed up and carried into effect by the deliberative and judicial act of the Church of which the offender was a member; proceeding as if the Apostle were himself present and presiding: "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, after ye are 'gathered together'" (an obvious and most significant allusion to our Lord's words in Matt. xviii.), "and my spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus Christ"—His authority and potent presence—"to deliver such an one to Satan." Here the local Church, in its duly authorized gathering together in Christ's name, is recognized by the Apostle as invested with authority and effectiveness, just as if an apostle were in the chair; the authorizing presence and the enabling "power of our Lord Jesus Christ" being guaranteed.

We learn from 2 Cor. ii. 6 that the Church by its proper meeting did, by a majority, exclude the sinning member, with striking demonstrations of aroused solicitude for the purity and honour of the Church of Christ. We thus learn that in Church courts the majority must decide.

This disciplinary act had the happiest result, both on the Church and the expelled member; awakening him to a sense of his guilt, and plunging him into the profoundest penitence. Whereupon St. Paul shows that excommunication is not final, but only pending penitence and reformation. He declares the severance already suffered to be "sufficient punishment." Yet **forgiveness** is to be, in the first instance, their act; and that act St. Paul authenticates by anticipation: "To whom you forgive anything, through you I forgive also; for what I also have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, through you I have forgiven it, in the presence of Christ." That is to say, if the Apostle has, as his words imply, anticipated their forgiveness of the offender by his own forgiving, he has done this by no means as forestalling their action. On the contrary, it was **through them** that his apostolic pardon was to take effect. And all this was "in the presence" and "with the power of the Lord Jesus," Whose presence and effectuating power He has guaranteed to His faithful, dutiful people.

The twofold power of binding and loosing, of forgiving or retaining sin, involves the authoritative (because authorized), the positive, unhesitating, and effective proclamation of pardon to every individual, on the sole condition of repentance, faith, and confession of Christ as the Divine Redeemer. Now, wheresoever and by whomsoever this Divine amnesty is proclaimed in faith and received in faith, it is, **as a matter of fact**, realized by "millions of transgressors poor;" being carried into effect by the Blessed Spirit's blotting out of the believer's

sins from his own conscience, in proof that they are blotted out from the book of God's remembrance, and that the believer's name is "written in the Book of Life."

What a grand prerogative! And, best of all, it is verified by present, patent facts, to be "known and read of all men." In order to bring men to be reconciled to God on the basis of Christ's atonement, they must first be **convinced** "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment;" and the Church of Christ is the organ of His Spirit for this great work; and that not only, though of course mainly, through its separated ministry. The Church can still "bind." It can "shut up unto the faith." It can still deliver over to the custody of Divine justice the impenitent sinner who **neglects** so "great salvation," so that there shall be no hope of "escape" by any other door.

Christ's servants can still exultingly adore their Lord, Who, while He "frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad, turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish," yet "**confirmeth the word of His servant**, and performeth the counsel of His messengers" (Isa. xlv. 25, 26).

And wherever, whenever, and in whatsoever Church, this work of binding and loosing by the proclamation of the promises and the sanctions of the Gospel slackens or falters, there and then the decay of spiritual life sets in, and the sands of this world's desert encroach upon the garden of the Lord. But wherever this proclamation gives no uncertain sound, God gives testimony to the word of His grace by stretching forth His hand to heal, and moral and spiritual signs and wonders are wrought in the name of His holy servant Jesus (Acts iv. 30); God "bearing them witness" who bear witness for Him. Wherever, on the other hand, this truth is thrust into the background by priestly pretensions or intellectualist speculation, or is but darkly and vaguely set forth, it is, as was to be expected, either unrealized, or but dimly and vaguely realized, in personal experience.

The witness of the Spirit is infinitely better than the word of a priest, and "the answer of a good conscience," a "conscience purged from dead works," than any formula of clerical absolution. Yet a **general absolution**, as an emphatic way of preaching the Gospel: "**He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His Holy Gospel**," followed by, "Wherefore let us beseech Him to grant us true repentance and His Holy Spirit," is altogether unobjectionable, and may be very useful. But it must not be regarded as the exclusive prerogative of office to make that glorious announcement.

Still further, the Church of Christ has the power of the keys, not only in its mission "to open the door of faith" to the penitent, as St. Peter did "to the Jew first," and after that "to the Gentiles;" we have seen that it has also the right of admitting to, excluding from, and reinstatement into, its own most blessed privileges. And it must never allow any extraneous power whatever to interfere with that. It has also the power to censure, to reprove, to "rebuke with all authority," through its duly constituted courts and officers, "letting no man despise" (Titus ii. 15) its regulations and decisions. It has power "to deliver" ungodly professors "to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. x. 20); but it has no right to hand them over to the secular power for the punishment of spiritual sins by temporal penalties. The interference of the State with the spiritual concerns of the Church should in no case be submitted to.

Conversely, the Church, on its part, may in no wise intermeddle with a man's civil rights or liberties, as the papacy has done whenever it could grasp the power, and as Calvin did in Geneva, and the Independents in America. "The weapons of" its "warfare" are not "carnal but spiritual," and therefore only "mighty through God." And how much grander are these than the whole paraphernalia of penances and persecutions to which a despiritualized Church finds itself obliged to resort!

The power of the keys, then, is the power of effective preaching and discipline; but not a sacerdotal prerogative or a sacramental wonder-working.

**Have we any direct proof that forgiveness of sins was, by Christ Himself, and His Apostles themselves, connected with preaching?**

We have decisive proof of this. Our risen Lord says: "Thus it behoved . . . that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name amongst all nations" (Luke xxiv. 46, 47). St. Paul says: "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts xiii. 38, 39).

**Have we any instance in the New Testament of a Church court binding and loosing?**

We have a very striking one in the case of the Council of Jerusalem, who, on the one hand, did "lay upon" the Churches "necessary things;" and, on the other, released them from any unnecessary

“burden ;” and those Churches, on their part, “rejoiced at the consolation” (Acts xv.).

Is there any force in the analogy which High Church writers so persistently insist upon with regard to Korah, Dathan, and Abiram ?

There is very solemn force in the incident to which they refer ; but its bearing is most awful against the impiety of an invasion of the prerogatives of the One High Priest and Legislator. Korah, the ring-leader of the insurrection, was one of “the sons of Levi.” The insurrection was against Moses and against Aaron. And the protest of Moses is, “Ye take too much on you, ye sons of Levi.” All who are loyal to the Great High Priest should “flee from the tents of these men,” who dare to intrude into His office.

There is clearly a strong contrast between the New Testament representation and the Roman Catholic and High Church doctrine of the power of binding and loosing ; but is it of any grave practical importance ?

The contrast is of vital importance. The New Testament represents Christian ministers as simply teachers and overseers of Christ’s flock, with so much ruling right as is necessary to the discharge of their responsibilities. The High Church theory makes them priests, without whose official acts there is no guaranteed grace whatsoever, and no secure salvation to the sincerest, holiest, most loving, and devoted believer. The New Testament gives the individual believer direct access to Christ, and makes him hold of Christ immediately. The High Church dogma says : As no man can come to the Father but through the Son, so no man can come to the Son but through the clergy. It affirms that the Apostles exclusively received from Christ the power of forgiving sins ; that this right and power they conveyed to bishops, who alone have either authority or efficiency to convey the same rights and powers to others, by imposition of hands ; that these again, so ordained, and no others, have power to convey grace through the Sacraments, without which there is no sure way to, or hope of, eternal salvation. Every believer is thus made dependent for salvation on a certain body of men. The chain which binds men to the priesthood is thus complete and compact in every link : Without bishops there could be no priests : without priests there can be no valid or effective sacraments ; without sacraments there is no promise of salva-

tion ; thus, apart from the episcopal succession, there is no assurance of salvation.

This whole theory is not only without any New Testament basis, but is in contradiction to the clearest, most continuous, and most conclusive teaching of the Gospels, Epistles, and Apocalypse. The Christian Minister's first duty, we have seen, is that of an ambassador, who offers, with full authority, "the last offers" of God's grace to His rebellious sons.

Personal assurance comes to the penitent as the Holy Spirit's answer to individual faith in Christ. On "believing" we are "sealed by the Holy Spirit" in our "hearts."

**When, then, a High Church priest says to a Minister of another Church : We of the English, the Roman, and the Greek Churches derive our priestly powers through a traceable succession of episcopal ordinations from the Apostles themselves : where did you get yours ?—what is the answer ?**

The answer is, in the first place, **We have no such pretensions whatever.** We reject them. We disclaim for ourselves, and deny to any other mortal, any such powers. We deny their existence. Your pretensions are fictitious ; your claims are usurpations. Stand out of the way from between us and our own, our One Divine Mediator. He is our High Priest ; we want and we will have no other. You are the successors of the Apostles, are you ? and as such you claim to hold Divine grace in your own hands, and to deal it out to those who come to you for it, because it can be had nowhere else ? We ask you how you came by these tremendous powers ? You lead us up to Paul, for one, and those whom he ordained, as having transmitted their powers. We give you Paul's answer to all such assumptions : "**Who, then, is Paul, and who Apollos, but ministers, by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man**" (1 Cor. iii. 5). Paul and Apollos alike repudiate any such claim as you pretend to.

**When an Anglican or Romish priest says to a living member of a living Church, Why do you go for the sacraments and for spiritual food to men who never had a bishop's hand upon their heads ? "The grace of God which bringeth salvation" flows through us only—what is the answer ?**

This : We are bidden by Christ Himself to join His Church ; to be baptized, to solemnize His Supper in remembrance of Him, to "for-sake not the assemblings together" of His people. We must do this.

We find various congregations and associations of His people under different sub-titles, but all bearing His name, and owning Him as their Saviour and Head. We cannot consort continually and connect ourselves closely with all; we must choose some one of these with whom we shall assemble stately and be definitely united. We can in no wise encourage you in your pretensions by submitting ourselves to your claims, and by aiding and abetting your encroachment on the Kingly and the Priestly rights of Christ. And as to the Sacraments, we know from those very Apostles from whom you profess to derive your supernatural yet unverified powers, that the efficacy of Baptism and the Lord's Supper depend on the faith of the recipient, not on the official genealogy of the ministrant. We may not give up to you either Christ's priesthood or our own. The "ministers by whom" we "believed" are the proper ministers for us. **Not you.** "If to others" they are "not Apostles, yet at least" they are to us, for the seal of their apostleship are we in the Lord (1 Cor. ix. 2). "Our defence to them that examine us is this."

Shall we leave them to come to you? We have no time, no taste, no skill, to trace your sacerdotal genealogy. We are conscious of a new birth, which we found apart from your official acts. We actually experience the change which you profess to effect by your official acts. You bring us pretensions; we bring you facts.

Suppose you should be after all mistaken! For you yourselves have to take your official descent on trust. **Then our faith would be vain; and we yet in our sins.**

Those who found the wandering sheep must see that they are securely folded and wholesomely fed, they and their lambs; and, in particular, that they be guarded against such false teaching as yours, and such a bondage as you would bring them under by thrusting yourselves in between them and their Redeemer. **You are the Intrusionists.** Our Ministers preach not themselves, or their "orders," or "the Church;" they "preach Christ Jesus the Lord." Our Ministers can trace their historical and, better still, their spiritual connection with a long and grand succession of **preachers of the Gospel and ministers of Christ.** They can make out a spiritual and historic pedigree nobler far than any that comes through popish bishops. Our Ministers do not "take the honour" themselves; they are consciously "called of God," and God's people recognize the call. They have been approved by the people amongst whom they lived and laboured; they have gone through several successive siftings; nearly all of them have had years of special training for the work, as

well as years of probation in it. **What have you to show like that?**

On the one hand, you Anglican High Churchmen affirm that every one who is baptized by an Anglican or Roman Catholic or Greek priest is in and by that very act born of God. Are you prepared to contradict our Lord's test, "By their fruits ye shall know them"? On the other hand, you affirm that the ministrations of those who are not episcopally ordained cannot be means of saving grace, and yet thousands are conscious, as a matter of fact, that they are, and the proofs that they are "are known and read of all." If the New Birth which your baptism conveys leaves in the baptized the carnal mind still **predominant**, we want it not. The New Birth of which the New Testament speaks is a real and realizable effect. Do not come and tell us that those whom from our childhood we have seen exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit are without grace, because their Ministers were not episcopally ordained; whilst those who do the works of the flesh are God's children, because they were baptized by priests with the assumed faultless pedigree! Do not tell us that they that have lived Christian lives and fallen asleep in Christ are perished, in spite of all their faith and fitness for heaven, because those who ministered to them were not in the supposed succession!

Yea, a man may say, "Show me thy regeneration without thy works, and I will show thee mine by my works."

The High Church claim that through the line of bishops only can the Church be kept in existence from age to age, and the grace of the Holy Spirit conveyed to human hearts, is a transposition and inversion of the Apostles' Creed. It makes out that the Church comes first and the Spirit second, and only through the Church.

**If God may save without or apart from institutions which He has appointed, are we still under strict obligation to observe them?**

This point is well put by Matthew Henry: "Though God is not tied to instituted ordinances, we are."

The Parables of the Tares and of the Draw-net are quoted as if they invalidated the clear and seemingly conclusive passages of Scripture which you have alleged in support of Church discipline. Will fairness of interpretation admit of this?

How can it? Surely a parable cannot countermand plain, positive,

and oft-repeated precepts. A parable must not be so pressed as to repeal the constitutive and authorizing directions which Christ gave to His Church, and to set at nought the foundation facts on which Christ built His Church. In these parables our Lord does not even mention "the Church," but "the kingdom of God," which, as many parables of which the kingdom is the subject show, is not absolutely identical with the Church.

### **In what sense is the world the field?**

The world is Christ's field in the sense of being at once His property and the scene of His labours, and those of His servants. Christ is the great "Householder," House-Master, or Landlord, of the whole world.

### **What, then, is the point of the Parable of the Tares?**

The point of the parable is that, while there is a specific difference amongst those "who profess and call themselves Christians," between the good seed and the mere professing Church-weed, yet it is not possible for even the best men to infallibly discriminate between a specious but spurious professorship, on the one hand, and a genuine but immature godliness, on the other. The perplexing similarity between wheat and "tares"—**darnel**—in the earlier stages of the growth of each, is used to illustrate the perplexing resemblance of a sincere but immature believer to some insincere and unregenerate professors, and the consequent necessity of the uttermost caution in dealing with cases in which there may be a possibility of mistake.

**Then it seems that, after all, the Parable of the Tares has a strong bearing on the true spirit and the just exercise of Church discipline?**

It has a very strong significance with regard to Church discipline. It must have, inasmuch as the spirit of the Christian dispensation must inspire the Christian Church. It condemns entirely the Roman Catholic condemning at once to bodily and eternal death those who resist its authority or question its dogmas. To hurry a man out of "the world," is indeed to "root up" the man from "the field." But, beyond this, it shows that the brave benignity of British law, which is learnt from Christianity, and which always gives the accused "the benefit of a doubt," should obtain in the Church of Christ.

The spirit of Church discipline must be that of Christ Himself. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench" (Matt. xii. 20); and that notwithstanding the annoyance and offensiveness of the smoke. "Him that is weak in the faith

receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." "Brethren, if a man be **overtaken in a fault**, ye that are **spiritual restore** such an one.

Bear ye one another's burdens," etc., the burdens especially of conscious and disheartening faultiness (Gal. iv. 1, 2). "**Confess your faults** one to another, and pray one for another." Even lukewarm Laodicea must be borne with hopefully, whilst admonished faithfully. This is part of the **Motherhood** of the Church.

This accords with the spirit and acts of the Apostles. "We were **gentle** among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (1 Thess. ii. 7). The Corinthian Church, as we have seen, is solemnly and severely rebuked for not putting away a brother who was living in gross, open sin, and was ordered to "**put away**" the offender; but, on his repentance and reformation, they are commanded to restore him. The barren fig-tree must be the subject of intercession, not excision, and the **slow** faith and unreasonable reasoning of Thomas must be, not excluded, but borne with and overcome.

But we must not, under cover of the Parable of the Tares, plead for tolerance within the Church of the **dissemination** of doubt or denial of the foundation-facts on which the Church is built, of the Godhead and atonement of the Church's Founder, and of its basal and baptismal faith, or the connivance at disgracefully immoral habits in Church members. Ministers of the word must not be allowed to sow bad seed amongst God's children in open day, because the "enemy" cannot be hindered from sowing it "by night;" and palpable poison-grass must not be allowed to turn "the glad husband-field" of gospel labour into a desert because it is possible to mistake sickly and unripe wheat for darnel. A persistent attempt to substitute the word Church for kingdom of heaven would end in palpable absurdity. For example, how can a **conspicuous and aggressive community**, "a city set on a hill," be like "treasure hid in a field"?

In theological systems which claim the name of Christ, and yet reject His avowals as to His own conscious personality and the purpose of His coming and His death, the demon of deliberate denial does not slyly sow his seed and slink away: he strides across the servants' path to face it out with them. The fact that we cannot get rid of the darnel makes it all the more urgent that we should clear out the **twitch**. When the disciple of love forbade believers even to admit into their own houses the propagators of anti-Christian error under the guise of Christianity, and when St. Paul instructed his representative, "A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject," neither the one nor the other disregarded or forgot the Parable of the Tares.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE CHURCH AND THE TRUTH.

**What is the relation of the Church to the Truth ?**

The Church is the **Witness-bearer of the Truth** (Acts i. 8); the custodian or **Trustee** of the Truth ; to it "are committed the oracles of God" (Rom. iii. 2). It is the **Teacher** of, and the **Trainer** in, the Truth (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). It is "the pillar and ground of the Truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15). It is that which lifts it up to public view, and gives it a resting-point amongst men. If the Church let fall the Truth, it becomes itself a meaningless and melancholy monument.

**Does the Truth, then, derive its authority from the Church ?**

On the contrary, the Church derives its authority from the Truth. The Church is the responsible **Executrix** of the estate ; not its donor, nor its lord. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the work of the Church in relation to the Truth is most active. The true Church bears the Truth in its hand, in its heart, and in its mouth. It finds or puts the Scriptures in the hands of those whom it addresses, and asks, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" If the docile reply be, "How can I, except some one should guide me?" that needed guidance it finds "some man" to give, as Philip to the Ethiopian. But what it gives is **guidance**, and preaching. That is all the disciple needs with the Bible in his hand. The Church has no right whatever to put upon the words of Scripture any sense inconsistent with their common-sense, grammatical meaning.

The Church depends upon the Truth, not the Truth upon the Church. The authority of the Church is **derived** from Scripture ; that of Scripture is direct from God. The Church was made for believers, not believers for the Church. The Church must not be allowed to suffocate the spiritual life of its children by **overlaying** it, as the mother, in the judgment of Solomon, "overlaid" her sleeping infant. To put the Church above the Truth is worse than an inversion ; it is a perversion. Even under the Old Testament the head of a household was its teacher, and "the things that are revealed belonged to **him** and to his **children** for ever" (Deut. xxix. 29), and it was his inalienable duty to teach them. And when the dreadful judicial catastrophe took place, "The law shall **perish** from the **priest**" (Ezek.

vii. 26), God raised up extraordinary teachers, such as the rustic Elijah and Amos.

The relation of the Church to the Truth is set forth strikingly in 1 Tim. iii. 15: "The house of God, which is the Church of the living God; the pillar and pedestal of the truth." The Church, which is itself the temple of the living and "very present" God, not the monument of an absent divinity, is the support and stay of something higher than itself, namely, "the Truth," which in the next verse is designated "the mystery of godliness"; which again is described as "great," *i.e.*, vast in its dimensions, and massive in its momentous meaning; and again is described as consisting of certain historical events, beginning with the Incarnation, "God manifested in the flesh," etc. One main purpose for which the Church itself is built, and taken possession of by the living God, is to act as the support and stay of the truth amidst the mutations of worldly affairs and the fluctuations of human opinion. As a pillar and pedestal give permanent prominence to that which they uplift and sustain, so the Church gives permanent prominence to the Truth, which without such a substantive, substantial resting-point in society and history, would occupy an obscure and movable position in the world. As Christ Himself "to this end was born, and for this cause came into the world," that He "might bear witness to the truth," so His Church now carries out part of His mission also; "for this cause, to this end," came it into the world. The Truth is to be "preferred before" the Church, because it "was before" the Church. All the grand events which constitute "the mystery of godliness," beginning with the Incarnation, "God manifested in the flesh," took place before the Christian Church began to be; and but for those events it never could have begun to be. Believers are called, individually and collectively, to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" (Phil. ii. 15, 16). It is said that the temple on Mount Moriah, as seen from the mountains round about Jerusalem, was a most resplendent object, radiating the sunlight, as if it were itself luminous. So the Church should ray forth the light of truth, as if "clothed with the sun." "Faith cometh by hearing" still. And, "how shall they hear without a preacher,"—the living voice? The Church's commission, and its charter of incorporation, and its trust-deeds and title-deeds, are all contained in the Scriptures; and it is the Church's duty to publicly read, to fairly and straightforwardly expound, and to circulate those Scriptures. The Scriptures are its lesson-book as a Teacher and a Trainer, and its sole standard of appeal. Our Lord Himself maintains that if the

Jews did not believe the “writings of Moses,” they could not “believe” His spoken “words.” It is the duty of the Church to display the truth, defensively and aggressively: “Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth” (Psalm lx. 4).

To subordinate the Truth to the Church—which is the very principle of Roman Catholicism—is to obey man rather than God.

**Is the Church at liberty in any way to abridge or modify the original sacred deposit of Truth?**

No more than any other body of trustees is at liberty to tamper with the property of which it is put in trust, or with the title-deeds of that property. St. Paul’s charge to Timothy is still in force with regard to every Christian teacher: “The things which thou hast heard from me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to Teach others also” (2 Tim. ii. 2). The committed Truth in its integrity and identity, “the same,” must be the transmitted Truth. And faithfulness and teaching power are the grand requisites in a Minister of Christ. This truth was committed at the first, and must still be transmitted, “among many witnesses.” The whole body of believers has a solemn sponsorship with regard to the Truth. Each successive generation must “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” Ministers of Christ are “stewards of the mysteries of God,” not proprietors of them (1 Cor. iv. 1).

The intimate relation of the Church to the Truth is seen also in the fact that the Church organizations either grow out of the Truth, or else the Truth is warped to fit the organization. A Church will naturally either adjust its organisation to its doctrinal teaching, or else bend its teaching to its organization.

The terms of the Church’s teaching-commission are explicit: “Make disciples of all the nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded” (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). The Church has no power whatever to make new sacraments, or decree new doctrines. Believers are not only under no obligation to listen to, they are under the most sacred obligation not to listen to, unscriptural teaching from the most regularly ordained Minister. The injunction, “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge” (Prov. xix. 27), applies to anti-scriptural teaching from whomsoever it proceeds (2 Tim. iii. 5).

If at any time the rightful rulers of the Church put believers into

the dilemma into which the Sanhedrim put the Apostles,—that of either disobeying man or disobeying God,—they must follow the example of the Apostles, and obey God rather than man.

Christ has not left His Church at the mercy of its bishops, as the hierarchical fiction of “apostolical succession” would make out by asserting that the very life of the Church is bound up in the unbroken line of bishops. Even Dean Goulburn, for example, contends that “the one Society which the Apostles founded has been propagated only in the line of episcopal succession” (*Holy Catholic Church*, p. 84). If a believer should find himself reduced to the dilemma of either parting company with “the truth of God,” or with the bishops, there can be no Scriptural or sensible doubt as to whether of the two he should give up.

**Is this an imaginary case ?**

Far from it. Many true believers have found themselves shut up to this alternative.

**Is it the Church that makes a man a Minister of Christ ?**

Christ makes His own Ministers. The Church cannot make a Minister : a merely man-made Minister is no Minister of Christ. What the Church does is to recognise the Minister of Christ’s own making, by the three great notes **Grace, Gifts, and Fruit**. No Church has any right whatever to put a man into the ministry on whom Christ Himself has not impressed these marks.

**When may Church-authorities and Church-courts claim to speak and act with the authority of Christ Himself ?**

When they speak and act according to Christ’s instructions and in Christ’s spirit. “He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me” (Luke x. 18).

**Where are these instructions to be found ?**

In the written word of God : “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter iv. 10). “To the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. viii. 20).

## CHAPTER XI.

## OF SCHISM AND HERESY.

**What is Schism ?**

“Schism” is a Greek word, which in the New Testament is rendered a **rent** when it refers to a garment (Matt. ix. 16 ; Mark ii. 21, 22) ; when used with regard to a community it is left untranslated, being anglicised by leaving out the last letter, changing *schisma* into schism ; or else it is rendered “division” (John vii. 43, ix. 16, x. 19 ; 1 Cor. i. 10). The word designates a division of opinion or sentiment so decided as to cause a community to break up into contending parties—John vii. 43, ix. 16, x. 19 ; 1 Cor. i. 10, 11, 12, which last passage shows that **schism** implies “contentions,” and **partizanship** ; and is the opposite state to the being “perfectly joined together, in the same mind, and the same judgment”—xi. 18, xii. 25, 26, 27 ; in which last passage again the absence of mutual sympathy and consideration is described as “**schism in the body.**” In the Epistles “heresies” and “schisms” are so nearly synonymous as to be used interchangeably ; “I hear that there be divisions (**schismata**), **schisms** among you. . . there must be **heresies** among you,” etc. (1 Cor. xi. 19).

Here we see that the Corinthian Christians, while still locally at one, were guilty of the sin of schism, as really, though not so definitively, as if they had “parted asunder the one from the other.” On the other hand, a temporary misunderstanding, “a paroxysm” (Acts xv. 39), between men devoted to and intent upon the extension of Christ’s kingdom, like that between Paul and Barnabas, that between Luther and Zwingli, and that between Wesley and Whitefield, is not schism, although it be so “sharp” as to cause a different course of action ; even as cramp or spasm, be the paroxysm ever so acute, and the distortion ever so unsightly, is not death ; nay, even fracture, though “compound,” so long as it is reducible, does not compel amputation. **Agreeing to differ, as at present informed, is not schism.** Morally, it may be the reverse of it,—the **agreeing** to condone the difference and fraternize with the differing.

The definition of schism given by Dr. Hook (*Church Dictionary, sub voce*), though genial and candid, and, therefore, very hard to reconcile with High Church principles, nevertheless does not cover the whole area of schism. He defines it. “A causeless separation from

such governors in the Church as have received their authority and commission from Jesus Christ." If there be a sufficient cause, then, there may be a separation without a schism. There may be "separation"—formal, avowed, and local—without schism; and there may be schism without formal, avowed, and local separation. According to St. Paul, dissensions amongst those who still meet each other at the Lord's Table constitute schism. The Corinthian schism was plainly a disjointing and a dislocation of "mind and judgment." Local separation in worship is in comparison infinitely unimportant, except as the result and indication of a severance of mind and heart. This disjointing of mind and judgment, not being healed, naturally produced painful and disabling friction, "like a foot out of joint." "There are contentions among you" (1 Cor. i. 11), angry, hostile altercations—

"Question fierce and stern reply  
Gave signal soon of dire debate."

This is a totally different thing from the frank and thorough discussion and ventilation at the Council of Jerusalem. Hence **partizanship**, the being "puffed up for the one against the other," the adopting party names and party cries, every one saying, "I, for my part, am of Paul; but I of Apollos, but I of Cephas, but I of Christ" (1 Cor. i. 12)—I, for my part, am a Paulite; but I am an Apollosite, but I a Cephite, but I a Christite. The worst schism of all is that which takes Christ Himself by force and makes Him a party-leader, and turns His uniting Name into a flag of faction. Schism was "not a separation from the Church or Christian society or Commonwealth, but a separation in the Church" (*Wesley*).

Schism, then, in the New Testament sense, denotes the opposite tendency to the "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The schismatic is "any one" who "is minded to be fond of contention" in "the Church of God" (1 Cor. xi. 16); manifesting the opposite spirit to that of Paul. "Give no occasion of stumbling either to Jews or to Greeks, or to the Church of God; even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. x. *ad fin.*, xi. 1).

The schismatic humour showed itself in Corinth, not only in rival schools of thought and taste, but also in social class distinctions, even at the Supper of the Lord.

It is plain, then, that there may be schism without separation formal, avowed, local, and organic. There may also be separation with-

out **schism**. Disunion of mind, judgment, and hearts, even within the same pale and under the same rulers, is **schism**. Outward disconnection, whilst yet the mind and heart are one, is **not schism**. Two orders of Roman Catholic monks at fierce feud are in **schism**; High Church and Low Church in angry contention are in **schism**.

The simple, straightforward translation is, "That there be no **breach** (or **breakage**) in the body" (1 Cor. xii. 25). The fact that the Greek word **schisma** has been anglicised instead of being translated has lent to it a conventional and changeful and not seldom a misleading meaning. With a Roman Catholic it means a refusal to acknowledge the supremacy of Rome, or the setting up of more than one pope at a time. With an English High Churchman it means any Church organization but the Episcopal, and that in assumed unbroken succession from the Apostles. But this is not the New Testament sense. In it a seclusive and exclusive Church-coterie is a **schism**. A so-called conventicle of loving souls, holding out the right hand of fellowship to, and invoking benediction on, all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and reserving all **anathema** for the man who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, is not in **schism**, but in catholic unity.

It is most observable that St. Paul uses the phrase **breach** ("schism," A.V.) "in the body" (1 Cor. xii. 25), with reference to the introduction into the Church assemblies of worldly distinctions, which, though they did not break up outward union, yet disturbed the balance of brotherhood, and deadened the sense of mutual belonging, and arrested the flow of sympathy. "God has kneaded" them together. Church members should be not only knit together as "one body," but **kneaded** together as "one bread;" into one homogeneous mass; "giving redundant honour to the most destitute, that there may not be fracture in the body; but that the members might have the same anxious care for one another; and whether one member suffer, all the members should suffer with it, or whether one member be honoured, all the members should rejoice with it" (24-26).

Here the arrest of the nervous current is considered as to all intents and purposes a **breakage in the body**. **Want of sympathy is schism**.

The resolute refusal of a non-acquiescent minority to withdraw from a Church with the institutions and the polity of which they are painfully and persistently out of sympathy, and the retention of external connection with it for the purpose of agitation; the adoption of the war-cry, "**No supplies, no surrender, no secession,**" may be **schism** in its most aggravated as well as its most aggravating form.

Wesley justly gives, not as a definition of schism, but as an example of schism, as at least an admissible application of the term : “ **A causeless separation from a body of living Christians.**”

But when such a separation has taken place, the question as to whether of the two divisions is the **schism** is not to be determined by counting heads. The minority are not necessarily the schismatics.

The New Testament meaning, then, of the word **schism** is clearly this : **A wilful or wanton breach of the unity of the Church.** And, in order to know whether this or that act or state be a breach of the Church’s unity, it is, of course, necessary to determine in what the unity consists. Now the Holy Spirit distinctly declares that the unity of the body consists in, and is constituted by, the unity of the Spirit, which animates the body. “ **As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ**” (1 Cor. xii. 12). Here Christ and His Church are affirmed to be one; and the unity of all the many members results from, and depends upon, the union of each with Christ. “ **For, by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.**” “ **It is this Spirit-breathed sympathy, this conscious affinity, which constitutes the true unity of the Church ; as it is the sense-diffusing soul that constitutes the oneness of the human body. Believers are not one by reason of their membership in the same external community ; on the contrary, it is the spiritual oneness which constrains them to unite in outward fellowship. External association can no more constitute a Church, than the most scientific juxtaposition of limbs, trunk, organs, could constitute a body. “The unity of the Spirit” is the unity which the Spirit creates ; constituting one body that which, otherwise, even under the most compact and consummate organization, must be a heterogeneous heap.**” It is this which makes it “ **the Church throughout all ages.**” \*

St. Paul represents the oneness of the Church as sevenfold. “ **There is (1) one body, (2) one Spirit, (3) one hope, (4) one Lord, (5) one faith, (6) one baptism, (7) one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all**” (Eph. iv. 4-6). So long then, and so far as, believers are animated by the “ **one Spirit,**” sustained, purified, and “ **saved by**” the “ **one (‘lively’) hope ;**” hold fast and hold forth the “ **one faith** ”—“ **the faith of the Son of God, Who loved**” each, “ **and gave Himself for**” each ; the “ **one baptism**” “ **into the name of the**

\* Fourth Fernley Lecture p. 163.

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," preceded, accompanied, or followed by baptism with the Holy Ghost; the Spirit being in each the Spirit of adoption, crying, "Abba, Father,"; "one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in all";—so long and so far as this sevenfold unity is maintained, the oneness of the Church is secured, notwithstanding all "diversities" of organization as well as "of operation."

**When is withdrawal from any particular Church-organization not schism?**

Wesley's answer to this question seems soundly scriptural: When the reason of withdrawal is, "I was not allowed to continue therein without breaking a commandment of God" (Sermon lxxv., 17).

Still further, Wesley justly maintains: "If I was not permitted to remain therein (*i.e.*, the Church to which I at present belong) without omitting what God requires me to do, it would then become meet and right, and my bounden duty, to separate from it without delay" (*ibid.*). He particularly instances the putting a restraint upon efforts for the salvation of others. "And in all these cases the sin of separation, with all the evils consequent upon it, would not lie upon me, but upon those who constrained me to make that separation by requiring of me such terms of communion as I could not in conscience comply with" (*ibid.*).

**Am I, then, to conclude that the Church which is left, however numerically large or historically old, is the schism, and not the person or persons leaving, however few, if the cause of separation be the "requiring" unscriptural "terms of communion"?**

Certainly; and thus the most stupendous schism in the whole course of history is the Church of Rome. For that huge persecuting sect excommunicates all the millions of believers who refuse to acknowledge the glaringly unscriptural, grossly unhistoric pretensions of the Bishop of Rome.

An instance of a mild and minute form of the like sort of schism is the refusal by some Baptist Churches to admit to the table of the Lord any believer who has not been baptized by immersion, and in adult life. A Church, by shutting out all who use a discretion left them by the Master, through the elasticity and variety of meaning of the word "baptize," and by leaving undetermined the question of the time of baptism, proclaims itself a sect. The seclusiveness and exclusiveness

of the various mutually ignoring groups of **Plymouth Brethren** also give admonitory examples of schism.

**Can you suggest a simple practical test of the rightfulness or sinfulness of separation?**

Yes; so long as separation can be avoided without sin, it cannot be attempted without sin. What Burke says of revolution is equally true of separation. It **"will be the very last resort of the thinking and the good."** No outward separation is warrantable, or guiltless, which is not rendered necessary by the very objects for which the Church was constituted. Wesley's remonstrance is of the utmost force: **"Do not rashly tear asunder the sacred ties which unite you to any Christian Society. Take care how you rend the body of Christ by separating from your brethren."** A needless addition to the number of Christian denominations is **"a sore evil under the sun."** Equally weighty is Wesley's paternal exhortation: **"O beware, I will not say of forming, but of countenancing or abetting any parties in a Christian Society!"** For example, the agitating of one's own political party-views in a Christian Society is schism of a very dangerous type.

**But is there no advantage to the Church and to the world in the variety of Christian Denominations?**

There may be, and often are, through the overruling wisdom of God, incidental and temporary advantages which partially compensate for the terrible mischiefs that result from the many divisions in the Christian Church, and the rivalries and jealousies and mutual misunderstandings and misrepresentations, and the reciprocal repulsions and ill offices and tribal feuds of the **"Commonwealth of Israel."** Overlooked aspects of the truth obtain a more striking presentation, neglected elements of Church-life are rendered prominent, new or long-disused agencies and appliances are employed again, and thus souls are reached and rescued who might otherwise have perished. In the immature spiritual and intellectual condition of the Church, denominationalism is inevitable, and not altogether without utility. But when **"we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"** (Eph. iv. 13), the oneness of the Church will be gloriously manifest, and the world will believe in the mission of the Son of God.

And meanwhile, denominationalism is not sectarianism, so long as there is a frank, hearty, generous recognition accorded to each other's excellences, and sympathy is evinced at each other's discouragements, difficulties and failures, and joy in each other's successes.

### What is the scriptural mode of dealing with schism?

The first Church difficulty, or disturbance of the internal relations of His Church, which our Blessed Lord legislated for, was on the occasion of His second mention of "the Church" (Matt. xvii. 17), a key passage to which we have had frequent occasion to refer.

And this related to the smallest conceivable "rift in the lute,"—a misunderstanding between any two members of any local Church. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault **between thee and him alone.**" This injunction indicates the confidential relations subsisting between any two members of the Church; the relation of every individual member to every other underlying, and being the practical presupposition of, and being closer, more immediate and direct than, the relation of each to the collective Church. This is the first step. What is the second? "If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more." The privacy and intimacy of Church-relations is still to be guarded as much as possible. The second step is to be as informal and as unofficial as the first, and yet, being in Christ's name, His presence is promised at the gathering of the two or three in the interests of peace and harmony. What is the third step, in case of a second failure? "If he shall neglect to hear them" as well as "thee," "**tell it unto the Church.**" The first matter, then, calling for Church cognizance and intervention is a case of private "trespass" committed by one member against another; and obstinately persisted in, in spite of frank, fraternal, and gently graduated remonstrance. Unrepented, unamended, stubborn wrongdoing, on the part of one member of the Church towards another, demands prompt and determinate Church action. But Church action is itself irregular if it forestall private attempts at reconciliation. Yet Church-sores are not to be left to fester and spread, so as to produce "backbitings, whisperings, swellings," etc. (2 Cor. xii. 20).

We see from this that in the Master's view the unity and purity of the Church should be its first care, and is of much more importance than numerical strength or unsound and heterogeneous inclusiveness. The unity and purity of each local Church, in the first instance; for a congeries, or loose aggregate of mutually independent Churches, each not "at unity in itself," can never constitute a united universal Church. And "tell it to the Church" and "hear the Church" must, in the first place, mean the local Church, as we have seen. He who refuses to listen to the remonstrances, persuasions, and directions of the Church with regard to the matters in dispute is to be no longer looked upon or treated as a member of the Church, but "as an heathen man and a

publican ; " that is to say, as an object of yearning pity, but not as fit to mingle in the intimate fellowships of the household of faith, which, in his present mood, he could not but disturb.

**Partizanship** in the Church, which is **schism** in the strict scriptural sense, must be dealt with in the like spirit, but in a less formal way. St. Paul did not treat the party spirit of the Corinthian Church as he treated the case of scandalous immorality,—a matter to be dealt with summarily and severely. He meets it with the most earnest remonstrance, points out its essential carnality, its lamentableness as a spiritual distemper incident only to the babyhood of Christian experience ; its unseemliness and evil tendencies. In a somewhat later Epistle, that to the Romans, he gives the most tender and earnest directions as to the right mode of dealing with such cases : " I beseech you, brethren, to take note of those who make the separations " (lit. **standings apart**) " and the snares, contrary to the teaching which ye have heard ; and turn away from them " (xvi. 17)—turn a deaf ear to them. They are to be treated by the rest of the community with the treatment prescribed by the Proverbs for the "**false witness**," and the "**tale-bearer**," and the "**whisperer**" who "**separateth chieffriends**."

The mode of dealing with little local schisms, or rather the **spirit** in which they should be dealt with, is that in which larger schisms should be also treated. There must be, amongst Churches, as well as amongst individual Christians, a most tender, patient, strenuous "**endeavour to keep**," and if let slip, to restore, "**the unity of the Spirit**," even though it be at the expense of the **uniformity of the structure**. Assuredly, "**the Catholic Church**" still subsists, and that Church is still, as at first, "**the communion (or fellowship) of saints**." Baxter's saying, "**The communion of saints must ever be a matter of faith**," is true, but only in a limited and guarded sense. The realization of that communion is, to say the very least, potential in every true believer. Nothing obstructs or delays its historic consummation but the inevitable conditions of our finite being and mundane existence,—mental misconceptions and prepossessions, and the distancing and divisive carnality which lingers in sincere but immature believers, and manifests and makes chronic a sour unripeness of experience. Let any two real living believers in Christ, of whatever denomination, from the proselyte to the papacy, to the Plymouth Brother of the smallest "**iron-room**," the very last and least secession from the last but one ;—let these be drawn together in frank and confidential converse on the realized facts of Christian experience, and their essential affinity is at once apparent. Nay, let them but read each other's books or letters

on **experimental religion**, and the rough-speaking, strange-mannered, rich-robed Joseph is perforce "made known unto his brethren," despite their Canaanitish dialect and their patchy pilgrim-garb. An interesting illustrative instance occurs in the Letters of Madame de Sévigné. When the Huguenot D'Abbadie, in the reign of Louis XIV., published his book on *The Truth of the Christian Religion*, no sensible, serious, educated Roman Catholic for a moment entertained a doubt of the salvation of the man who could write like that. The only difference of opinion in the most Catholic circles was as to the mode or **ratio** of his salvation. To suppose him not a Christian was felt to be too absurd.

**What is the spirit which should be cultivated amongst the various Christian denominations of our own time?**

The remonstrances of George Gillespie, in the troublous times of the Civil War, are as seasonable now as then :—

"'Let there be no strife between' us and you, 'for we be brethren,' and is not 'the Canaanite' yet 'in the land'? It shall be no grief of heart to you afterwards that you have pleased others as well as yourselves, and have stretched your principles for an accommodation in Church government as well as in worship, and that for the Church's peace and edification. . . Alas! how our divisions and contentions hinder the preaching and learning of Christ, and the edifying one another in love! Brethren, we shall be one in Heaven; let us pack up differences in this place of our pilgrimage the best way we can. Nay, we will not despair of unity in this world. Hath not God promised to give us 'all one way,' and that Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim'? Hath not the mediator, Whom the Father heareth always, prayed that 'all' His 'may be one'? Brethren, it is not impossible. Pray for it, **endeavour** it, **press hard toward** the mark of accommodation. How much better that you should be one though somewhat shortened and bound up, than to be divided, though at full liberty and elbow-room!"

**Is secession from any particular Christian community necessarily a breaking-off from relations with the Universal Church, or a snapping of historical connection with the main body of the Church?**

Not necessarily. From the first dissidents—the Novatians—downwards, the originators of these divergences, of course, derived their Christian life through the very Church from which they diverged.

Moreover, if the new **swarm** retains, so to speak, its working and its organizing instincts, so that the hive is filled and the honey made; —in plain words, so long as the seceders or the ejected retain the

**word**, the institutions of Christ, and, above all, faith and love to Him, and the rules and exercises of holy living and dying, they are still members of the universal Church.

### What is Heresy?

The Greek word rendered **heresy** means (1) Simply the **taking** of anything, or the **choosing it for oneself**; that is, an indulged preference, a **manifested partiality**; (2) A **particular intellectual following** or **separate school of thought**. It is the word used by Greek writers to designate the various philosophic "schools" or coteries.\* In Gal. v. 20, where **heresies** are classed by St. Paul amongst "**manifest works of the flesh**," the word still has a cognate meaning: "a religious party or faction among Christians, under some human leader" (Parkhurst, *sub voce*).

Here "**heresies**" are classified with "**enmities, jealousies, wraths**," and are placed between "**seditions**" (A.V.), "**divisions**" (R.V.),—*lit.*, standings asunder,—"**envyings and murders**." Here "**heresies**" obviously mean self-willed, fierce, polemical partizanships in the arena of theological speculation. The best commentary on this classification is the history of theological speculation. In 2 Peter ii. 1 we read of "**heresies of destruction**," the "**destruction**" being especially the "**swift destruction**" which those who "**stealthily bring them in**" "**bring upon themselves**." These "**heresies of destruction**" are represented as introduced by the side of the truth, by "**false teachers among**" Christians themselves; the extreme instance being even denying the Lord that bought them: denying the Godhead of and the **redeeming work of Christ** by or through His blood: denying that **He is the Lord**, and that **He bought them**. Here **heresy** comes clearly into the region of speculative theology, philosophizing manipulation of the Gospel, to adjust it to the intellectual tastes of individuals or schools of philosophic speculation.

In short, the word **heresy**, alike in classical and New Testament Greek, always has relation to the intellectual sphere. The moral badness of heresy, self-pleasing, self-willed doctrinal partialities, obtains in Judaism and Christianity, not in heathen philosophy, because in

\* One asked Demonax what **heresy** [school] in philosophy he chiefly embraced" (*Lucian*). "From Thales, the Ionic **heresy** [school of philosophy] was denominated" (*Plutarch*). Thus St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, speaks of the "**heresy** [A.V., sect] of the Sadducees." And Christians are nicknamed "**the heresy** [A.V., sect] of the Nazarenes," where the sneer is not in the word "**heresy**" or "**sect**," but in the word **Nazarenes**. Thus Constantine (*Eusebius, Hist. Eccles.*, x., 5) speaks of the Church as "**the Catholic heresy**,"—using the word in the modern sense of **persuasion**.

the two former it tampers with clear and authoritative revelation, of which the last-named is in ignorance.

Hence the providential purpose of the permission of heresy is its testing power. "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor. xi. 19). Heresies act in the Church like a spiritual test. They at once discriminate the true disciple of Christ, who is reverently and sensitively teachable, from the masterful spirits who came into Christ's school, not so much to learn of Him as to rectify His teaching, by adjusting it to their own superior intellectual tastes and tendencies, their own school of philosophy, or the spirit of the age.

**Heresy is schism in its intellectual and theological form.** It is the attempt to turn the school of Christ into a debating club, which Paul so summarily, almost scornfully rebukes. "If any one has a mind to be fond of contention, we have no such behaviour; neither the Churches of God" (1 Cor. xi. 16). As much as to say, "The Churches of God" are not gymnasia for intellectual athletics, for mind-matches. If that is the sort of thing you affect, go to the Porch or to the Grove, or the Market-place, or the Sophist's schoolroom. When Paul rented the school of Tyrannus, it was not for feats of logic, flashes of genius, trials of intellectual strength. "God is not the God of disturbance—unsettlement—but of peace, as in all the Churches of the saints" (1 Cor. xiv. 33).

Heresy, then, is the indulging one's own intellectual tastes, picking and choosing for oneself what one shall "receive to hold," instead of submitting implicitly to Divine revelation.

The heretic and the "weak in the faith" are not cognate but contrasted characters. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." The "heretical man" is in love with "doubtful disputations." The features of "the heretical man" are not dimly outlined by St. Paul: "Shun foolish questionings, and genealogies, and strifes, and fightings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is heretical after a first and second admonition refuse; knowing that such a one is perverted and sinneth, being self-condemned" (Titus iii., 10, 11). A heretical man is one who is persistently given to leaving the plain pathway of truth, in order to start and hunt down intellectual game, from a passion for the excitement of the chase: speculations which lure the human mind beyond its limits, like an over-eager hunter, who gets lost in mountain mist, having left behind his more sober-minded company, whom he would fain have induced to follow him, or, like the royal huntsman in the

poem falls into the ambush of some robber-clan. When you have warned him of his peril, solemnly and repeatedly, waste no more time or breath about him, but go steadily on in the right path. He knows he is risking his neck for the sake of indulging his proclivities. Do not risk yours by going any further after him. **Wilfulness** is an essential element alike in unbelief, in heresy, and in schism. The hard core of the tumour of heresy is an obstinate refusal to submit the individual judgment to "the wholesome words of the Lord Jesus Christ."

No one can be scripturally charged with heresy because he cannot think the wording of this or that **Creed**, drawn up by uninspired men, to be an accurate compendium of the "words of the Lord Jesus Christ," flowing from His own lips and the pens of His Apostles. Heresy, like unbelief, is essentially a **moral** pravity. It is a warp in the will which induces, and betrays itself in, a mental obliquity. It is a **misbelief** which is really unbelief; and that in a pronounced and aggravated form. Except where it is the result of wrong teaching, it is a wrong-headedness which comes of wrong-heartedness; as many brain-affections are caused by unhealthy action of the heart. Hence Isidore of Pelusium, in the fifth century, justly pronounces that "the cause of all heresy is **self-sufficiency** and **pre-assumption**." That man is a heretic who, professing to be a disciple of Christ, sets himself, in any point, above the Master. It is the indulging in a self-asserting and self-pleasing eclecticism, and the refusing to accept those statements of Christ which do not accord with one's own preconceptions, or mental preferences, or habitudes. It is the **patronizing** Christ as, **on the whole**, decidedly the best teacher that has yet appeared; complimenting His wonderful wisdom when **these sayings of His** do not happen to clash with one's own intellectual postulates. Not all doctrinal error is heresy; even as not all intellectual perplexity or hesitation is unbelief. But to **dogmatize doubt** is to proclaim oneself a heretic.

As that man is no true servant of Christ who takes exception to any one of Christ's **commands**, so that man is no true **disciple** of Christ who takes exception to any part of Christ's **teaching**.

**But how can an intellectual error be accounted as a sin?**

In no way, except in so far as it is the result of a wrong state of heart and will. If the action of a truth in the intelligence were in no wise affected by passions, prepossessions, or proclivities, for the control of which the will is responsible, heresy would be no more blameworthy than blindness. But the intellectual conclusions of human

beings are often allowed to be strongly warped by passion, prepossession, and proclivity, which might have been mastered by the will, rectified and enabled by Divine grace in answer to prayer. This is demonstrable by induction from a wide range of unquestionable facts. In ten thousand instances, passion has been overcome by a wary resoluteness; prepossession has been dislodged by candour and patient inquiry; and proclivity has been held in check by a prompt surrender to evidence. And when unbelief or misbelief is the result of wilful or indolent limitation of view, idolatry of a favourite hypothesis, and a stubborn or reckless contempt of responsibility, it is culpable in a degree proportioned to the importance of the subjects which it refuses to thoroughly and fairly investigate. And when these subjects are **God, Duty, and Immortality**, such unbelief or misbelief is clearly and, if unrepented of, fatally condemnable. The damnableness of unbelief and the destructiveness of Christ-denying, salvation-slighting heresy is no less certain when they spring up rankly from the dust of decomposed convictions which have been "willingly let die." Open-mindedness and earnestness are the moral elements of faith. Damnable unbelief and heresies "of destruction" are the outgrowth of intellectual churlishness or childishness, as opposed to childlikeness. The reason why men are carried about with every wind of doctrine is, because they indulge in a drifting recklessness of taste, which makes their souls the sport of all the cross currents of speculative sophistry. What is wanted is a heaven-clear candour combined with pure faith in, and absolute loyalty to, the word of God.

**But is not the Church of Christ founded on a Person, not on a doctrine?**

Certainly, the Church of Christ is founded on the **Person** of Christ; and, therefore, it must hold and insist on definite and decided views as to **His Person**. It must at least make up its mind on one point, to leave which a moot point is deliberately to build itself upon the shifting, sodden sand. It must make up its mind as to the question whether its Founder be a mere man, or "God manifest in the flesh." What can be the use, or the sense, or even the possibility of believing in a person, whilst leaving it an open question **Who that Person is**, and what are **His claims to be believed?** The saying, "We believe in a Person, not a proposition," is ridiculous sophistry, to which it is impossible for any one to adhere. Dr. Vance Smith, in making his absurd demand that every preacher shall be at liberty to preach in any pulpit whatever he thinks to be

true about Christ, or God, or any religious subject whatever, is obliged to admit, "One subject of belief, it is evident, was indispensable, and could not be omitted: A man must necessarily believe in Jesus as the Christ, who would in these days be a Christian at all." ("Church and Chapel," *Contemporary Review*). This is a decisive admission that Christianity was founded, not on a Person about Whom nothing could be positively affirmed, but on a **definite proposition with regard to that Person, viz., that "He was the Christ."** To believe that Jesus was the purest and loftiest Teacher that ever spoke or wrote, and the most perfect character, the only perfect character, that ever appeared on earth, is not enough, even according to Dr. Vance Smith's notion.

And what can be the use of believing that Jesus was the Christ, without knowing what is included in that affirmation?

**The extreme Broad Church theory, then, is not even proximately accordant with the true conception of the Church?**

It is in many most important and vital respects contradictory to it. It makes the oneness of the "faith," even as to the most vital points, such as the Godhead or the mere humanity of the Founder, quite a moot matter; and it practically obliterates the broad distinction and the strong contrast which the New Testament insists on between the Church and the world.

**Where is the perfect Church?**

Neither in the Past nor the Present, but in the Future.

**Will the Church of Christ ever again be a united Church?**

Assuredly, our Lord's High-Priestly prayer must yet be answered, "That they all may be one." But this in no wise guarantees a universal uniformity of Church government. The real mischief lies far deeper than "diversities of operation" and organization. Strong and deep and widespread and healthy as is the yearning for unity, it can never be embodied in a hard, unyielding uniformity. Doubtless, external reunion is "devoutly to be wished," where it represents and results from the oneness of faith, of life, of conviction, and experience. And even this is not to be despaired of; but it is not to be insisted on as absolutely essential. God will give His people "all one way" of holy living and holy dying. Nothing can be regarded as the fulfilment of the prayer of Christ, and the compensation for the travail of His soul, which stops short of mutual recognition by all the

Churches as forming part of one **spiritually** undivided Society, and the convincing manifestation of this fact to the world. The Churches must, in the "one faith" "once delivered to the saints," and in mutual love and cordial co-operation, be "perfect in one;" every discord being brought into the consummate harmony of a "full-voiced choir;" and this so manifest as to be to "the world" conclusive evidence of the Divine mission of the Church's Head, Who, through His Church, has wrought such miracles of good. This was part of "the joy set before Him" as He bore His cross to Calvary.

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**PART II.**

**WESLEYAN-METHODIST POLITY AND HISTORY.**



A  
HANDBOOK  
OF  
WESLEYAN METHODIST POLITY AND HISTORY.

BY THE  
REV BENJAMIN GREGORY, D.D.

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Prepared by order of the Conference.

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# WESLEYAN METHODIST POLITY AND HISTORY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE ORIGIN OF METHODISM.

THE polity of Methodism is so direct and natural an outgrowth of its history that it is impossible to understand the former without reference to the latter. It is, therefore, necessary to treat the two concurrently, and the conjoint study of the history and the polity will add greatly to the interest and the instructiveness of both. It is, indeed, impossible to give an intelligent answer to the question, **What is Wesleyan Methodism?** without going back to its origin, and tracing the successive stages of its development.

#### **How did Methodism originate?**

The safest and fairest answer to this question is that given by Wesley himself:—"In 1729 my brother and I read the Bible; saw inward and outward holiness therein; followed after it, and incited others so to do" (Wesley's Works, vol. viii., p. 300). This was the historic starting-point of Methodism. It is here to be noted:—

(1) Methodism originated with two young brothers, the elder twenty-six, the younger twenty-two years old. Their childhood had been spent in a godly home under the most strict religious training; their boyhood in great public schools; their young manhood in our oldest university. They had received the highest culture which England could at that time afford. Their wonderful career began with **devout and earnest Bible-reading**. Methodism grew out of a fresh, immediate, openminded **searching of the Scriptures**. It has its **life-root there**. It is only as rooted and grounded in the Scriptures that it can flourish, or that its existence can be justified. **As a**

matter of history, Methodism was derived directly from "the Bible." A divergence from the Bible would be a desertion of its primary principle.

This principle Wesley himself continually maintained; as, for example, in the sermon at the laying of the foundation of City Road Chapel (CXXXII.). "From the very beginning—from the time that four young men united together—each of them was *homo unius libri*, 'a man of one book.' They had one and only one rule of judgment. . . They were continually reproached for this very thing, some terming them in derision **Bible-bigots**, others **Bible-moths**; feeding, they said, upon the Bible as moths do upon cloth. And, indeed, to this very day, it is their constant endeavour to think and speak as the oracles of God" (Wesley, Sermon CVII.). This is a fundamental fact of the highest importance to the right conception of Methodism. Its basal principle is: **The Scriptures are the source and standard of spiritual, moral, saving truth.**

Again, so late as 1786, Wesley asks as to the Methodists: "**What is their fundamental doctrine? That the Bible is the whole and sole rule of Christian faith and practice**" (Works, xiii., 258). Their life-breath was the **Spirit in the Word** :—

"My joy Thy sayings to repeat,  
Talk o'er the records of Thy will,  
And search the oracles Divine  
**Till every heartfelt word be mine."**

(2) The young **Bible-searchers** (more than **Bible-students**) "**saw inward and outward holiness therein.**" They saw the revealed obligation, and, therefore, of course, the revealed **attainableness** of inward and outward holiness. The second principle embodied in Methodism, then, is: **The individual obligation and attainableness of inward and outward holiness.** This, again, Wesley states at large: "God raised up a few young men in the University of Oxford to testify those grand truths, which were then little attended to; **That without holiness no man shall see the Lord**; that this holiness is the work of God; that this holiness is the mind that was in Christ, enabling us to walk as He also walked" (Sermon LXIII., 13). These great truths they declared on all occasions, in private and in public. To slacken in the testimony to the necessity and attainableness of inward and outward holiness, which is the "mind of Christ" and the **walking as He also walked**, would be to lose hold of the second great principle of Methodism, and to frustrate the

“grand” purpose for which “God raised up” the men to whom the name Methodist was first applied.

(3) Intense earnestness, each one for his own soul, was very remarkable in the first Methodists, and was much remarked at that time. What Mr. Maurice says of the Unitarianism of the same period —“It was essentially impersonal” (*Kingdom of Christ*, vol. i., p. 150) —applies almost equally to the orthodoxy of that day. Personal religious responsibility, experience, enjoyment, holiness of heart and life, danger of eternal death—all this was to a very melancholy extent slurred by the teaching of the time. How much the doctrine of baptismal regeneration conduced to this is very plain from Wesley’s Journals. High Churchism and latitudinarianism worked together to the same result.

The spiritual awakening of the individual soul is, then, the third principle of Methodism, the intense and practical conviction that “**We have to do**” with God, individually and immediately (Heb. iv. 13). This principle is embodied in the two short hymns which were, perhaps, the most sung of any during the first century and a quarter of the existence of Methodism: “A charge to keep I have,” etc., and “Be it my only wisdom here,” etc. (Hymns 318, 320).

(4) This searching of the Scriptures and pursuit of the holiness which these young students “saw therein,” though intensely personal, was not solitary. It was associated. “My brother and I read,” etc. “They endeavoured to help each other, and in the close of the year were joined by two more. They soon agreed to spend two or three hours together every Sunday evening. Afterwards they sat two evenings together, and, in a while, six evenings in a week, spending the time in reading the Scriptures, and provoking one another to love and to good works” (Wesley, Sermon CXXXII.). “In the four or five years following, another and another were added to the number, till, in the year 1735, there were fourteen of them who constantly met together.” Thus came into steady operation that principle of association, that habit of fellowship in the pursuit of personal holiness, that systematic mutual edification, which forms so striking a feature of correspondence between Methodism and the primitive Church. This association attracted the keen gaze of others, who rightly, though in ridicule, called it “**The Holy Club**”—“a true word spoken in jest.”

Before we advance further, however, it is necessary to note that Wesley, in his *Short History of the People called Methodists*, names three successive origins of Methodism: (1) at Oxford; (2) at Savannah, in April 1736, “when twenty or thirty persons met at my house;” (3) in

London. "On Monday, May 1st, 1739, our little Society began in London." But **associated Scripture search** and pursuit of personal holiness were principles common to each successive "rise" of Methodism.\* (Cf. Rules.)

The striking combination of intense individual earnestness with the Christian instinct of association is an essential element of Methodism. These young Oxonians "saw" in the Scriptures that it is vain to attempt to save one's own soul, whilst not practically caring, with corresponding solicitude, for the souls of others; or to successfully follow holiness in a hermit-like seclusion.

Vital, original Christianity can be realized **only** in spiritual fellowship. Hence the two brothers not only "followed after" holiness, but also "incited others so to do." The strength of the expression must be noted: "incited;" not merely induced. This truly describes the pointedness and pressingness of their appeal. Hence the endeavour to incite others to join us in the pursuit of holiness is an essential element of Methodism.

(5) This movement was marked by the very opposite of eccentricity or extravagance. It was steady, regular, and singularly methodical. That little band of gownsmen, the first Methodists, were noted for nothing so much as for strict regularity in study, in attendance on Church services, and in the humblest philanthropic labours amongst prisoners and the sick poor. Hence the descriptive nickname, Methodists, which has clung to their followers ever since. The walking according to rule is of the very definition of Methodism.

But it is important to remember that the name was originally a nickname. Wesley designates his Societies, in an Address to George II., "the people in derision called Methodists" (Works, i., 456). Wesley only acquiesced in the name as used by others: "the people called Methodists."

But did not Methodism itself change within a few years of its rise? Was not the original Society in Oxford scattered? And did not the two Wesleys make an entirely fresh beginning some years afterwards elsewhere?

As already stated, the third rise of Methodism took place in 1737-8, when two new elements were introduced; but the five original principles were never lost sight of for a moment.

\* The endeavour now set on foot in the United States to recall the youth of Methodism to the associated study of and exercise in the primal principles of Methodism is rightly named *The Oxford Guild*.

**What were the two new elements ?**

This Wesley himself goes on to state: "In 1737, we saw, **This holiness comes by faith.** In 1738, we saw, **We must be justified before we are sanctified.** But still holiness was our point—inward and outward holiness."

This, then, was the next stage in the formation of Methodism: the rediscovery of the fact that the necessary association for the cultivation of personal holiness must have a **doctrinal basis**; that doctrinal foundation being formed of two massive blocks: (1) "**Holiness comes by faith,**" not by works or by clerical ministrations. (2) "**We must be justified before we are sanctified.**" The rediscovery of these two New Testament truths by John and Charles Wesley shattered, like an earthquake, the foundation on which they had built the whole superstructure of personal salvation. And this change in their views was as stable as it was sudden, as profound and practical as it was vivid and resistless.

It was a **rediscovery**, for the Methodist doctrines were those of the English Reformers; as the ex-Nonconformist Churchman, Isaac Taylor, has well said: "**These Methodists, rather than any other Churchmen of their times, may make good their pretension to have been, in doctrine and in spirit, the genuine sons of the English Reformed Church.** But Methodism, in a deep and genuine sense, held on to Nonconformity, and to **whatever had been good in Puritanism.**"

The Methodists had much the advantage on the ground of expansive and adventurous Christian philanthropy; on **this** ground, in fact, **the founders of Methodism have no rivals.** Thus did this new ministration of Apostolic Christianity receive a double authentication—first and formally from the Episcopal Church, and then virtually from the Nonconforming Church **the double continuity of a formal and of an occult ordination.** Visibly they were ministers of the Church from which they separated, and which cast them out; **by congruity in doctrine, by sympathy as martyrs or as sufferers for the same Gospel, they stood related to the Bohemian and the Waldensian bodies, and were honoured by the opprobrium which attached to the names Wickliffeites and Lollards**" (*Wesley and Methodism*, pp. 135, 137).

**But how could intelligent, simple-minded searchers of the Scriptures avoid seeing these truths as soon as they began the study of the New Testament ?**

"**Their eyes were holden**" through the defective, and therefore

misleading, teaching of the Anglican pulpit and press at that time, and especially by that of the guides whom they had chosen.

### Who were these misleading guides ?

Wesley answers this question too. They were very great and good men, and most powerful writers ; but mystified in this particular : William Law on *Christian Perfection* ; Thomas à Kempis on *The Imitation of Christ* ; and Jeremy Taylor on *Holy Living and Dying* ; all most edifying books to one who had already fast hold of the two principles, **Holiness is by Faith, and We must be justified before we can be sanctified** ; but strangely wanting in these very points (see Wesley's *Sermon at the Foundation of City Road Chapel*, and *Works passim*). Wesley earnestly recommended these books to those who had hold of the two fundamental principles.

### What, then, are the great doctrinal pillars on which Methodism rests ?

(1) **Justification by Faith** ; (2) **Sanctification by Faith** ; or, as Wesley puts it : "Repentance, Faith, and Holiness—the first, the way to religion ; the second, the gate of it ; the third, religion itself."

### But were not these very doctrines taught before the Wesleys began to teach them ?

Yes ; but they had (1) become overlaid by, and hidden beneath, incongruous teachings ; and (2) they had been left confined in Catechisms and Confessions of faith. The Wesleys gave them a **popular and personal presentation**. Mark again the **personal, positive, and peremptory** terms in which Wesley instinctively expresses the doctrine : "**We must be justified before we are sanctified.**"

### What was the next step in the formation of Methodism ?

Wesley tells us : "Just at this time (the year 1739), when we (the nation) wanted little of filling up the measure of our iniquities, two or three clergymen of the Church of England began vehemently to call sinners to repentance. In two or three years they had sounded the alarm to the utmost borders of the land. Many thousands gathered together to hear them, and in every place where they came many began to show such a concern for religion as they never had don

before" (Works, viii., 203). These clergymen were the three Oxford Methodists—George Whitefield, Charles Wesley, and John Wesley.

This stage in the creation of Methodism indicates another essential element of Methodism. It is a **vehement evangelistic** or revivalistic and reformativè enterprise. Hence it has been rightly named **The Great Revival**.

These old doctrines burst upon the country with the vividness of lightning. They came upon the people like a new revelation; yet they were in the Prayer-book and the Homilies all the time. Wesley says: "The book which, next to the Holy Scriptures, was of the greatest use to them (the Methodists) was the *Book of Homilies*." And nothing is more striking and blessedly prominent in the Prayer-book than the doctrine of the necessity and efficiency of "the healthful Spirit of" God's "grace." But the teaching of the Established Church has rightly been pronounced by legal minds as equivocal on some points. The Wesleys took its doctrines in the Arminian, which is clearly the preponderant sense. But they especially re-asserted two great truths, which had been allowed to drop into abeyance, or had even come to be denied, derided, and decried: **Assurance**, or the **consciousness** of personal reconciliation with God; and **Entire Sanctification**. Their teaching on Assurance was substantially that of Hooker's Sermons, and of the Reformers of the sixteenth century. But the Westminster Assembly, in 1643-7, condemned this doctrine; and most divines, both Puritan and Anglican, regarded it as the special privilege of advanced saintship; whereas the Wesleys claimed it for every believer.

There can be no more startling proof than that afforded by the Wesleys themselves of the all but extinction of the torch which Latimer and Ridley had lighted up in Oxford. The two brothers had been brought up in the most religious rectory in England. Their mother was the devotedly pious daughter of an eminent ejected clergyman; their father was the son of a Nonconformist Minister, and had been educated for the ministry in a Dissenting academy. They were themselves selected from amongst the clergymen of their time as the most earnest available for an arduous foreign mission. Yet they lived, the elder to the age of thirty-five, the younger to that of thirty-one, before either of them became aware that Justification by Faith was the doctrine of the Reformed Church of England, of which they themselves, their father, and their elder brother were distinguished ministers. For ten years Charles Wesley, for fourteen years John, had passed almost daily the spot in the centre of Oxford, marked by

an iron cross, where Latimer and Ridley had undergone a living cremation as witnesses for that very truth. During six of these years the brothers had been a byword of intense religiousness and punctilious Churchmanship. Yet the thought had never crossed their minds that the truth for which these heroes of the Church had perished was Justification by Faith. And when John and Charles Wesley seized each a smoking faggot of that martyr-fire, and, waving it into life, bore it flaming through the land, they were cried out upon and chased as incendiary madmen who were setting Church and State on fire.

And it was neither from the voice of their own Church-preachers, nor the pen of their own Church-writers, that they learnt the neglected truth, but from the lips of a Moravian teacher, and from the Commentaries of the great reforming German.

Charles Wesley learnt the great doctrine thus. Peter Böhler, a Moravian Missionary, preparatory to embarking for Georgia, "put himself under Charles Wesley's care to learn English." The pupil taught his tutor a yet nobler lesson. Charles Wesley was laid low by illness. When he seemed on the point to die, Böhler asked him, "Do you hope to be saved?" Charles answered, "Yes." "For what reason do you hope it?" "Because I have used my best endeavours to serve God." "Böhler," says Charles, "shook his head, and said no more. I thought him very uncharitable, saying in my heart, 'Would he rob me of my endeavours? I have nothing else to trust to.'" Poor returned missionary! he knew he had no success to lean on; and that silent, significant shake of Peter Böhler's head shattered Charles Wesley's false foundation of salvation by "endeavours." While still lying at the gates of death, Charles was visited by one Bray, a working brazier, "a poor ignorant mechanic who knows nothing but Christ." Under this mechanic's teaching the highly-cultivated man of genius forthwith placed himself, and was carried "in a chair" to his house in Little Britain, a narrow outlet from Smithfield. There he "first saw Luther *On the Galatians*." On reading which, he writes:—"I marvelled that we were so soon and so entirely 'removed from him that called us into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel.' Who would believe that our Church had been founded upon this important article of Justification by Faith alone?" In this, as in the formation of the Holy Club at Oxford, and in preaching out of doors, the younger brother outstripped the elder by a short space. John Wesley learnt the same truth by reading, "at a Society" the Preface to Luther *On the Romans*.

This grand verity the two brothers began to preach, "in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" which they had both signed years before as a necessary Article of Faith. They did this with a plainness, pressingness, persuasiveness of presentation, as a matter of the gravest personal and present urgency. As a Cornish servant explained to a clergyman's wife: It was "the **me** and the **now**" that made **all** the difference. The truths they taught were clearly stated in the Articles and Homilies, and vividly revealed in Scripture; but were decried by a large proportion of the preachers of the time, ignored by a still larger number, and held loosely by the rest. These young clergymen stepped forward and proclaimed these great spiritual facts, announcing that the dispensation of the Spirit is still in full force; that "the day of Pentecost was fully come," and was not yet closed. They taught that religion is a thing to be **experienced**; to be **enjoyed** in the heart, and **exemplified** in the life; and not merely professed by the lips, and performed as a ceremony, a spell, or a task.

Wesley's doctrine of **Perfect Love** was precisely that of the Collect: "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee." This Archbishop Potter heartily admitted to Wesley himself. Wesley defines Christian perfection in the words of Archbishop Ussher: "It is to have a heart so all-flaming with the love of God, as to continually offer up every thought, word, and work as a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God, through Christ" (Works, viii., 365).

These recovered doctrines were preached with all the eagerness and ardour of a new discovery, as of men waking out of sleep, and "alive from the dead." The best preaching of the time was rather a **coo** than a **call**, much more calculated to lull than to rouse. There was light without heat. Even the ministration to the dying was in the "easy and free" style, which Tennyson's *Northern Farmer* describes with such rude strength. There was mournful want of directness, urgency, and reality. The Methodist preaching was in strong contrast to this. The doctrine of the best divines was "distinct, but distant; clear, but oh, how cold!" But the Wesleys and their fellow-labourers brought the Gospel to **bear**, and to **bear down**, upon the understanding, the conscience, the feelings of their hearers. They were surcharged with spiritual power. With them every ministration was a mission. From their lips the old truths broke forth with a fresh and electric potency. Their message was: "The kingdom of heaven is **at hand**." They relied upon the self-evidencing power of the Truth. This Wesley

puts with great force in his reply to Dr. Middleton in 1749, in a passage of rare strength and eloquence, quite as suited to our times as to his :—

“ I experience them (the truths of the Gospel) in my own breast. . . . And this I conceive to be the strongest evidence of the truth of Christianity. I do not undervalue traditional evidence. Let it have its place and its due honour. It is highly serviceable in its kind and in its degree; and yet I cannot set it on a level with this. It is generally supposed that traditional evidence is weakened by length of time. . . . But no length of time can possibly affect the strength of this internal evidence. It passes now, as it has done from the beginning, directly from God into the believing soul. Traditional evidence is of an extremely complicated nature. On the contrary, how plain and simple is this, and how level to the lowest capacity! This traditional evidence stands, as it were, a great way off; whereas the inward evidence is intimately present to all persons, at all times, and in all places. It is ‘ nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart,’ if thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ. If, then, it were possible (which I conceive it is not) to shake the traditional evidence of Christianity, still, he that has the internal evidence (and every true believer hath the witness or evidence in himself) would stand firm and unshaken. I have sometimes been almost inclined to believe that the wisdom of God has in most later ages permitted the external evidence of Christianity to be more or less clogged and encumbered for this very end, that men, of reflection especially, might not altogether rest there. Nay, it seems, if it may be allowed for us to pry so far into the reasons of the Divine dispensations, that, particularly in this age, God suffers all kinds of objections to be raised against the traditional evidence of Christianity, that men of understanding . . . may **not rest the whole strength of their cause** thereon, but may seek a deeper and firmer support for it. Without this, I cannot but doubt whether they can long maintain their cause; whether, if they do not obey the loud call of God, and lay far more stress than they have hitherto done on this internal evidence of Christianity, they will not, one after another, give up the external, and, in heart at least, go over to those whom they are now contending with; so that, in a century or two, the people of England will be fairly divided into real Deists and real Christians. And, I apprehend, this would be no loss at all, but rather an advantage to the Christian cause.”

Then, turning to the Deists :

“ Go on, gentlemen, and prosper; shame these nominal Christians out of that poor superstition which they call Christianity. Reason, rally, laugh them out of their dead, empty forms, void of spirit, of faith, of love. Press on, push your victories. And then He Whom neither they nor you know now shall rise and gird Himself with strength, and go forth in His almighty love, and sweetly conquer you all together ” (Works, x., 74-7).

The late Bishop Fraser accounts justly for the success of the Methodist preachers, and such as they. “ They speak that which they know.

It is a faith thus quickened that vitalizes sacraments, prayer, worship. Without such faith all these things are dead—twice dead. With it they become a living, quickening power. It is the spirit of the prophet, before all other gifts, that the Churches need, to enable them to evangelize the world." (*Sermon preached at Cambridge*).

The rise of Methodism was in accordance with a principle which again and again reappears in the history of the Church; which is, in fact, the grand restorative force in the Church's life, when the great body of the Church, including its ministry, have become apathetic or corrupt. It is then made manifest that the life of the Church is not bound up with office; but that gifts as well as grace are diffused throughout the body, so that ministerial neglect and obstruction cannot preclude recurrence to first principles, revival of the old life, and doing "the first works."

### What was the next step?

Being excluded from the churches, the Methodists went into the streets and fields, and preached there.

### How did they justify such an unusual proceeding?

Thus: "Our call is, to save that which is lost. Now, we cannot expect them to seek us; therefore we should go and seek them. We are particularly called by going 'into the highways and hedges,' which none else will do, to 'compel them to come in.'"

Outdoor preaching can never cease to be an essential element of Methodism until the necessity for it ceases.

Besides, the Wesleys had ample precedents for outdoor religious services, in the frequent preachings at the Market Cross in various towns and at St. Paul's Cross by the early Reformers, and in the preachings of Wycliffe's and Queen Elizabeth's itinerant evangelists and others.

### Had the Wesleys no ulterior view in these extraordinary exertions?

None whatever. The two brothers would have been well content with the part of mere Church-hodmen, to bring living stones for others to build into the temple, and spiritual cement to bind them together. They had no ambitious plan and elevation of an ecclesiastical structure. Wesley wrote, nine years afterwards, in

1748: "We had no view therein, but, so far as we were able (and we knew God could work by whomsoever it pleased Him), to convince those who would hear what true Christianity was, and to persuade them to embrace it" (Works, viii., 248, 249).

**But did not Wesley take too dark a view of the religious and moral condition of the country?**

No darker than that which was taken by the most competent observers of the time, and not a whit darker than the ablest and most candid historians of the period have felt compelled to take. The very men who seem to stand out as a refutation and rebuke of this dark statement of the case—such as Dr. Watts, Bishops Butler and Sherlock, Horne and Horsley, Archbishop Secker and Archdeacon Paley—men of opposite theological schools and political parties, who agree in scarcely anything else, agree in most emphatically affirming, most graphically describing, and, alas! most helplessly deploring the melancholy condition of religion and morals at the time when the Wesleys and Whitefield "began to call sinners to repentance." Even the great Churchmen who wrote against Wesley, or withstood him to the face, or denounced him in their Charges, in those very Charges descant almost hopelessly on the portentous condition of the clergy and the people. Indeed, the absolute and appalling necessity for the Methodist movement in order to the rescuing of the Christian religion in England from inertness and contempt, and the morals of the English people from pestiferous corruption, has become a commonplace in English history, and is fully and emphatically admitted even by High Church writers, who yet condemn the salutary and timely movement, on hard, cold High Church grounds. As amongst the latest of these we instance Canon Overton, in his *Evangelical Revival*, published in 1887. He and his school condemn the Church authorities of Wesley's time for not **anticipating** Wesley's movement, and thus **preventing** it, in both the old and the modern sense; while they refuse to admit that either the dire necessity of the case or the benign results of the Revival can condone the alleged irregularities without which, they admit, these results would never have been attained. Whilst acknowledging that the Methodist movement saved the country from moral and religious ruin, and that, notwithstanding the opposition of its bishops and its parish priests, they still seem to contend that, if England could not be saved in a manner concordant with their own arbitrary notions of ecclesiastical pro-

priety, it ought to have been left to perish. Thus a particular view of Church order is set above the actual accomplishment of the glorious but neglected work, the carrying out of which is the sole excuse for the existence of the Church itself.

The condition of the Established Church in 1738 rendered it vain to look for deliverance from that quarter. In the first place, the parochial pulpits were miserably undermanned. Pluralism was, in thousands of cases, the only alternative to clerical starvation. **Queen Anne's Bounty**, which only amounted to £11,000 a year, was little more than a mockery of relief. "There were 1,071 livings (!) which did not exceed £10 a year, and there were besides these, 1,467 livings which did not exceed £20 a year. In all, there were 5,597 livings under £50 a year" (Deane's *Church of England and its Endowments*, p. 31). And be it remembered that the device of **pew-rents** in aid of the stipend of an incumbent only dates from the year 1818 (*ibid.*, p. 33). No wonder, then, that "the clergy" were "in many cases ignorant, and squalidly poor" (The Rev. C. J. Abbey, *English Church and its Bishops*, pub. 1887).

Acute Frenchmen by no means distinguished for religion were astonished to find England so much more irreligious than France. Montesquieu testifies that in English "society" a man was ashamed to be suspected of religion. The upper classes were "cankered with unbelief." Voltaire, too, was astounded to find England a much more godless nation than France. He says: "In Great Britain there is but just that minimum of religion which is necessary to distinguish one political faction from another."\*

In a recent work a clergyman who has looked as closely as any man into the condition of England at that time, after saying all he can in extenuation and alleviation, sums up the matter thus: "England was corrupt to the core. Venal politics, a dissolute stage, shameful laxity of morals, drunkenness a fashion, profane swearing a general habit, 'custom-house oaths' and such other perjury a byword and a jest, duelling an established usage of society, Tyburn horrors, roads garnished with gibbets, cruel amusements, might all afford material for a very dark estimate of the social condition of the age. Much might further be added of religion assailed with ribaldry and contempt, of a torpid Church, of indolent clergy and time-serving prelates, of enthusiasm regarded with horror even by esteemed divines; and, in fine, of **Wesley and his fellow-workers struggling bravely but alone, amid insult and obloquy, to revive the power of Christianity**

\* *Hist. de Louis Quatorze.*

amid a godless and perverse generation" (Abbey's *English Church and its Bishops*, 1700—1800, vol. ii., p. 77). The spiritual depletion of the Church which had resulted from the expulsion of two thousand of its very best men, in 1662, was deplorable. Whilst the unjustly decried intellectual state of the country has been amply vindicated by recent writers, the more terribly apparent has become the decay of piety in all the Churches of the land, and of morals in all classes of the community. "Even the Society of Friends did not escape the general declension" (*Life of Mary Pryor, the Quaker Minister*, p. 27). To this deplorable degeneracy the rancour and unscrupulousness of political partisanship greatly contributed. Church faction caught the spirit of political party. "The two Houses of Convocation became the theatre of most discreditable conflict amongst the High, the Low, and the Latitudinarian parties, till measures of Church Reform had become impossible. The great Church Council was closed for a hundred and fifty years" (Abbey's *English Church*, etc.).

In short, the spiritual and moral condition of the country was such as to imperatively require a re-evangelisation on the largest possible scale. The truth is, England had never yet been thoroughly evangelized. It had been ecclesiasticized instead. The Italian missionaries, sent by St. Gregory the Great, had indeed fixed the **Church** upon the soil, yet they and their successors but partially disheathed the nation. The very Christianity they brought from Rome was to a sad extent a mongrel compromise with paganism, a loose Concordat with the ancient superstitions. The various subsequent attempts to snatch up again and carry forward the arrested work—by the itinerant Preaching Friars, Wycliffe's travelling Preachers, Bernard Gilpin and the other Elizabethan evangelists—had all been sporadic and spasmodic. The Wesleys were the first to take the matter thoroughly in hand, and systematically, sweepingly, and with sustained and organized effort, to endeavour "to spread **Scriptural holiness** throughout the land."

**Then the Wesleys and Whitefield were not the only Englishmen of the time who saw and felt these facts ?**

Far from it. Many saw and felt the degeneracy of the Church and the deterioration of the clergy ; many were not so sunk in the snow-sleep of indifference as not to shiver any longer. They saw avowed and practical unbelief—"the abomination that maketh desolate standing in the holy place ;" and many crept together in little groups to keep up some vitality within them. And these small

scattered Societies were let alone. Their shepherds were almost as little heedful of the spasmodic religiousness found here and there among their flocks, as of their all but universal ungodliness and vice. If Wesley's Societies had not become **United Societies**, they would have soon ceased to be Societies at all. If Wesley had not folded in his gathered sheep, they would soon have fainted and been scattered on the hills again. The clergy, so far from being spiritual fathers, were not even the cheap and efficient police which the Erastianism of the day esteemed them.

That something must be done was felt by all who could not believe that baptism and Christian burial were all that was absolutely necessary for salvation. But the suggestions hazarded were either inefficient or were unworkable within the iron net of "Church-order," or without braving the surly, sometimes rabid growl of dog-in-the-manger negligence. The Societies of Drs. Woodward and Horneck and Bishop Beveridge had all but collapsed, being unadventurous and having little or no organic connection with each other. The attempt to recommence and consummate the evangelization of England without disturbing or overstepping the existing order of things, was a "a rueful jest." The convulsions of the Civil War, the revulsion of the Restoration, the ejection and long silencing of two thousand of the most capable and earnest clergymen, the exhaustion of the national mind and heart through the years of fierce ecclesiastical and political conflict, had produced their natural and inevitable results. For half a century High Churchism, Erastianism, and Latitudinarianism had almost divided the Church amongst them. True, the Wesleys rejoiced to find, under the smoke of our large towns, and in the seclusion of our rural parishes, quiet souls waiting for the kingdom of God, but, as they sang—

"Scattered o'er all the land they lie,  
Till Thou collect them with Thine eye,  
Draw by the music of Thy name,  
And charm into a beauteous frame."

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## CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST STAGE IN THE ORGANIZATION OF METHODISM,  
THE CLASS MEETING, ETC.

**What was the first step towards the organization of Methodism? And how was Wesley led to take that step?**

These questions are simply and clearly answered by Wesley himself :—

“Many of those who heard began to cry out that we brought strange things to their ears ; that this was doctrine which they never heard before, or, at least, never regarded. They searched the Scriptures whether these things were so. Their hearts also were influenced as well as their understandings, and they determined to follow ‘Jesus Christ and Him crucified.’ Immediately all the world rose up against them ; neighbours, strangers, acquaintance, relations, friends, began to cry out amain, ‘**Be not righteous overmuch ; why shouldest thou destroy thyself ?**’

“One, and another, and another came to us asking what they should do, being distressed on every side ; as every one strove to weaken, and none to strengthen, their hands in God. We advised them, ‘Strengthen you one another. Talk together as often as you can. And pray earnestly with and for one another.’ Against this advice we presumed there could be no objection, as being grounded on the plainest reason, and on so many scriptures, both of the Old Testament and New, that it would be tedious to recite them.

“They said, ‘But we want you likewise to talk with us often, to direct and quicken us in our way, to give us the advices which you well know we need.’

“I asked, ‘Which of you desire this ? Let me know your names, and places of abode.’ They did so. But I soon found they were too many for me to talk with **severally** so often as they wanted it. So I told them, ‘If you will all of you come together every Thursday in the evening, I will give you the best advice I can.’

“Thus arose, **without any previous design on either side**, what was afterwards called a **Society** ; a very innocent name, and very common in London for any number of people associating themselves together” (Works, viii., 249-50).

Thus Wesley himself was, in reality, the first Class-Leader. The little weekly gathering for united prayer, and “sweet counsel together” under experienced guidance, was the seedling of that multitudinous Methodist Society which has already spread over the whole English-speaking world in the four quarters of the globe, and has struck its purifying, healing roots into heathen, Roman Catholic, and rationalistic soils. Those few thoughtful, placid men and women who picked their

way to Wesley's lodging, along the dimly-lighted London streets, one winter evening, little thought of what a mighty host they were the vanguard; little thought "whereunto this would grow!" These little groups and gatherings so spread and multiplied that in nine years, 1748, Wesley could tell the world, "We introduce Christian fellowship where it was utterly destroyed. And the fruits of it have been peace, joy, love, and zeal for every good word and work" (Works, viii., 252).\*

1. According to Wesley's own account, the Class-meeting was originally and essentially a Penitent and Enquiry Meeting. The members "came together" once a week. See the Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies, etc., 1743.

2. His definition of the word Society is: "A company of men having the form, and seeking the power, of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation." Thus, in four years, the Penitent Enquiry Meeting had developed, or merged, or emerged into a meeting for mutual edification.

3. "That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each Society is divided into smaller companies called **Classes**." The Class-meeting thus

\* Of late the real historic origin of the Class-meeting has, by some writers, been confounded with a subsequent development. And from this chronological mistake has been drawn a most erroneous practical deduction: that "fellowship" forms no essential or original element of the Class-meeting. But the founder's own account is decisive. Wesley himself dates the origin of the Methodist Society from the date of the weekly experience meeting in London. And on this ground the centenary celebration was rightly held in 1839. The weekly meetings for fellowship were not, indeed, called **Classes**, until three years later, and the two Wesleys were the only Leaders. The little groups of mutually edified believers were named "Bands," which were met either singly or unitedly by one or other of the Wesleys, when either of them was within reach. Thus, under date January 4th, 1741, Wesley writes: "All the Bands being present, both of Bristol and Kingswood," etc. Again: "February 18th, I met a few of the Bands." Before 1742, these Bands had no appointed Leaders, and were thus left without oversight in the absence of the Wesleys. They were, moreover, very unequal in the number of members. The important step taken in 1742 was the making a new arrangement into groups of about twelve, each under a recognized **Leader**. The origin of the little weekly fellowship meetings in Bristol is recorded by Wesley, under a much earlier date, April 4th, 1739: "In the evening three women agreed to meet together weekly, with the same intention as those in London, viz., 'To confess their faults one to another.' " At eight

became an arrangement and appliance for securing effective **oversight of each individual member.**

### **What was the next step in the organization of Methodism?**

This, too, Wesley has described with characteristic simplicity :—

“The people were scattered so wide in all parts of the town, from Wapping to Westminster” (the boundaries east and west of continuous London a century and a half ago), “that I could not easily see what the behaviour of each person in his own neighbourhood was: so that several disorderly walkers did much hurt before I was apprised of it.

“At length, **while we were thinking of quite another thing, we struck upon** a method for which we have cause to bless God ever since. I was talking with several of the Society in Bristol concerning the means of paying the debts there, when one” (Charles Foy) “stood up and said, ‘Let every member of the Society give a penny a week, till all are paid.’ Another answered, ‘But many of them are poor and cannot afford to do it.’ ‘Then,’ said he, ‘put eleven of the poorest with me, and if they can give anything, well; I will call on them weekly, and if they can give nothing, I will give for them as well as for myself. And each of you call on eleven of your neighbours weekly; receive what they give, and make up what is wanting.’ It was done. In a while some of these informed me, they found such and such an one did not live as he ought. **It struck me immediately, ‘This is the thing, the very thing, we have wanted so long.’**

“As soon as possible, the same method was used in London, and all other places \* (*ibid.*).

Each local group of twelve was called a **Class**, as the simplest name for a cluster of people forming part of a large community. Their immediate overseer, who had special charge of their weekly meeting, and of collecting their weekly pence, was expressively called the **Leader**, to indicate his main function. This was the germ of the whole system of Methodist finance. But the Leaders were only the

four young men agreed to meet in pursuance of the same design. How dare any man deny this to be (in the substance of it) a means of grace **ordained by God?**” Happily we have further details in a letter of John Wesley’s, dated April 9th, 1739, published in 1877, at the Moravian Publishing Office in Fetter Lane, in their serial, *The Messenger*, under the heading: “Extracts from unpublished Letters of John and Charles Wesley, in the Provincial Archives.” There Wesley gives the names: “Mrs. Norman, Mrs. Greville, and Mrs. Panon;” adding, “Mrs. Panon desired she might propose the design to her two sisters, and offer them the liberty of joining with them. At eight Samuel Witham, surgeon, Richard Cross, upholsterer, Charles Bonner, distiller, and Thomas Westell, carpenter, met and agreed to do the same; who also desired they might make the offer of joining with them to three or four of their acquaintances. **If this work be not of God, let it come to nought. If it be, who can hinder it?**”

**collectors**, not the treasurers of the weekly contributions. They paid them into the hands of **Stewards** at another weekly meeting over which a **Preacher** presided. At this meeting they reported to the Preacher cases of sickness, or of those who "are disorderly and will not be reprov'd" (*ibid.*).

The Class-meeting also served another indispensable Church-purpose—the removal of "little misunderstandings and the composing of little quarrels" (*ibid.* See Matt. xviii.).

This was simply what Wesley calls a "prudential regulation," "little prudential helps." (p. 254). Nevertheless, it proved to be in reality the recovery of a lost element of Church life—**Christian fellowship**. "Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for each other. And 'speaking the truth in love, they grew up into Him in all things, Who is the Head, even Christ: from Whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplied, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, increased unto the edifying itself in love.'" (*ibid.*)

These **Classes** formed the **vital tissue** of the entire body. For the Wesleys lost no time in organizing their converts into a compact and disciplined body; persuading them to "stand fast together in one mind, in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the Gospel;" otherwise their labour would be almost lost. Besides, their object was to make every convert a Christian worker and a Christian soldier; and to make them all fellow-labourers and fellow-soldiers. As they prophesied to the "dry bones" of a dead and decomposing Churchmanship, there came **a mighty shaking** among the bones; "and **bone came to his bone**," and **there stood up a "great army**;" which had to be organized and officered and drilled. And the men whose prophesying and praying had brought down the Divine Breath looked on, "joying and beholding their order and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ." As, in the march of God's liberated people through the wilderness, their host was marshalled under "captains of tens," so these "new converts" were ranged in little companies, of which the normal number was eleven persons, under the **leadership** of some more experienced member.

The members were to meet the Leader and each other weekly; every one of them who missed that weekly meeting, it was the Leader's duty to visit in the interval between meeting and meeting. His first object was "to enquire how their souls prosper." Hence,

4. The Enquiry-meeting of the seeker for salvation became an **Enquiry-meeting** on the **Leader's** part, as to the steadiness and the success of that search. The Enquiry-meeting thus became an Experience-meeting.

5. To receive what they are **willing to give toward the support of the Gospel**. Thus with the Experience-meeting was connected a weekly offertory.

6. It was the duty of the Leader to **meet** the Minister and the Stewards of the Society once a week, in order to inform the Minister of any that are sick, or of any that **walk disorderly and will not be reprov'd**. Hence the Class-leader became a **living link** between the Minister and each individual member, to keep the former in vital touch with those especially who might speciallp need his attention. Hence it became

7. An organ at once of Church charity and Church discipline, the Leader being the **Minister's** informant and guide in the fulfilment of those parts of his pastoral duty on which Ezekiel so solemnly insists, namely, attention to the sick and the straying. The Quarterly Visitation of each class by the Minister brought him into direct contact with the well-attending members.

N.B.—The rotatory and exhaustive visitation of the members at their own houses was the Leader's special duty.

The Weekly Class-meeting was a perpetual reminder of spiritual privilege and obligation. It made the member pause and ask himself:—

“What **now** is **my** object and aim?  
 What **now** is my **hope** and desire?  
 To follow the heavenly Lamb,  
 And after His image aspire.”

Thus Methodism had its “root” in religious **enquiry** resulting in religious **experience**. And thence it must ever draw its “fatness.”

8. Methodism is essentially an **outspoken** fact, an **outspeaking** organism. It knows nothing of a still-born Church-membership, or a tongue-tied spirituality. It takes the padlock from a believer's lips, and makes him “fruitful in every good **word** and **work**.” The genuine Methodist can say: “I have not **hid** Thy righteousness **within my heart**. I have **declared** Thy righteousness and Thy truth. I have not **refrained my lips**, O Lord, **Thou knowest**.”

9. Methodism is essentially **social** and **gregarious**. The Class-meeting, the Band-meeting, the Fellowship-meeting, and the Lovefeast are indigenous to its soil and climate.

**Who were admitted into Church-fellowship amongst the Methodists?**

A primary principle of Methodism is that an **anxious enquirer after personal salvation**, one who has "a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from his sins," is a fit subject for Church-fellowship.

**What is the Scriptural justification of this principle?**

The Apostolic injunction, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." Awakened souls who "**inquire the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward**," are heartily welcomed to the Class-meeting. But the speculative, unteachable, and disputatious are courteously but firmly informed that the Methodist Class-meeting is not a debating club, but an associated search for salvation in its most assured, brightest, and highest form. Wesleyan Methodism does not demand in those whom it admits to its fellowship a robust faith or a ripened experience, but simply a sincere and earnest setting out on the Christian pilgrimage. "There is no other religious society under heaven which requires nothing of men, in order to their admission into it, but a desire to save their souls. I do not know any other religious society, either ancient or modern, wherein such liberty of conscience is now allowed, or has been allowed, since the age of the Apostles" (*Journal*, May 18th, 1788).

**What is the usual process by which any one becomes a member?**

He is either invited by or himself applies to some Minister, or Leader, or private member. The Minister, on being satisfied as to his sincerity and earnestness, recommends him to the most suitable and most convenient Class. But no one can become a Church-member **sub silentio**; that is, without inquiry into his spiritual state, as is the indefensible custom even in some Nonconformist Churches. The Leaders' Meeting has the right of objecting to the admission of any one whose course of life it deems to be disreputable or even questionable.

**But why could not the Wesleys content themselves with**

**preaching the Gospel, and leaving Providence to look after the converts, instead of forming them into Societies?**

Wesley answers : “ We have made the trial in various places ; and that for a considerable time. But all the seed has fallen by the high-way side. There is scarce any fruit remaining ” (*Large Minutes*). Hence, like the Apostles, the Wesleys forthwith formed their converts into Societies ; but they did not call them “ Churches,” or the United Societies a Church. Yet Fletcher, so early as 1759, perceived that they nevertheless did constitute a Church. In a letter of that date to Charles Wesley, he terms the United Societies “ the Methodist Church ” (Macdonald’s *Fletcher*, p. 55).

**Had the Methodists any right or any Scripture-warrant for making these arrangements?**

They had the plainest and most perfect right. Wesley’s defence of grouping his converts into **Classes** is conclusive, and will be found, as we go on with our examination, to apply to every successive development of the system. His answer to them who examined him is : “ (1) **There is no Scripture against it** ; you cannot show one text that forbids them ; (2) **There is much Scripture for it**, even all those texts which enjoin the substance of those various duties whereof this is only an indifferent circumstance, to be determined by reason and experience.” Here he lays down a firm Church-principle which cannot be successfully impugned : “ **The Scripture, in most points, gives only general rules, and leaves the particular circumstances to be adjusted by the common sense of mankind** ” (Works, viii., 254, 255). His point is this : The New Testament insists upon **Fellowship** as a necessary fact in Church-life ; but it does not prescribe the form in which fellowship is to be realized. Objections to this particular form—which is simply the best we can think of—are frivolous and vexatious, and indeed unworthy shirkings of a clear duty, unless the objector can point out a better mode of performing the mutual duties of Church-life. A Church which does not provide its members with the means of performing duties positively enjoined by Scripture, and of enjoying privileges sacredly guaranteed, cannot by this culpable negligence release its members from their duty, nor rob them of their privilege. It simply throws on them the responsibility of discharging their indispensable Church-functions in the best way they can. The Established Church did not make any attempt to provide its members with the means of mutual edification, confession, and oversight.

Whitefield would have been more strict in his terms of admission to the Society. In a *Letter to the Religious Societies lately set on foot in several Parts of England and Wales, wrote during the Voyage to Philadelphia, 1739*, he insists that all who are admitted must "produce sufficient evidence that they have tasted of the good word of life." He wisely insists that religious **experience** must be the staple of their conversations; they must not be mere Bible-classes. "Content not yourselves with reading, singing, and praying together, but set some time apart to **confess your faults and communicate your experience one to another**. For want of this, which I take to be one chief design of private meetings, most of the old Societies in London, I fear, are sunk into a dead formality, and have only a name to live." (Tyerman's *Whitefield*, i., pp. 318-19). Fletcher, too, was very earnest about the Class-meeting. In his first Pastoral Letter he says: "I beg you will not neglect the assembling of yourselves together, and when you meet in Society, be neither backward nor forward to speak." This clearly shows that **spontaneity** was of the essence of the Class-meeting.

Such was Wesley's openmindedness that he gratefully allowed **any one** to render him the friendly service which Moses' father-in-law performed to him—the making sensible, serviceable, labour-saving, practical suggestions.

And as God "put of the spirit" of Moses—a participation of his gifts and grace—upon the seventy sharers of his toil, so God put of the spirit of Wesley upon those carefully-chosen and well-looked-after **Leaders**.

Thus originated that great body of Class-leaders which has contributed so essentially to the conservation, consolidation, and growth of the people called Methodists. It was thus that they were "made a people"—an ordered community—"who were not a people," "to show forth the praises of Him Who had called them out of darkness into His marvellous light."

Wesley says: "If any of them is remarkably wanting in gifts or in grace, he is soon taken notice of and removed." Each Leader was examined as to his mode of meeting his Class.

Thus, too, originated that important Church-meeting, the **Leaders' Meeting**.

**What was the next step?**

The institution of the **Watchnight**, a revived usage of the Primitive Church which has of late years been happily imitated by other

Churches. This, too, was quite incidental, as is seen by Wesley's own account :

"About this time I was informed that several persons in Kingswood frequently met together at the school ; and when they could spare the time, spent the greater part of the night in prayer and praise and thanksgiving. Some advised me to put an end to this ; but upon weighing the thing thoroughly, and **comparing it with the practice of the ancient Christians**, I could see **no cause to forbid it**. Rather I believed **it might be made of more general use**. So I sent them word **I designed to watch with them** on the Friday nearest the full moon, that we might have light thither and back again. This we have continued to do once a month ever since, in Bristol, London, and Newcastle, as well as Kingswood ; and exceeding great are the blessings we have found therein " (Works, viii., 256).

Thus these Kingswood colliers, wending their way to and from their school

"By the struggling moonbeam's misty light,  
Or the lanterns dimly burning,"

set the example which is now followed by myriads, who throng the thoroughfares of our large towns with going or returning worshippers, and make our streets at midnight vocal with the happiest greetings. This restoration of a most edifying solemnity of the early Church, which is now adopted by so many clergymen, "High" and "Low," was the spontaneous conception of the converted colliers of Kingswood.\*

Note : here as elsewhere Wesley's docility, and his cautious comparison of every new expedient with the practice of the primitive Church. But note especially his single-eyed regard to the salvation of souls. "If I can probably conjecture that either by the **novelty of this ancient custom**, or by any other indifferent circumstance, it is in my power to 'save a soul from death,' am I clear before God if I do it not ?" (*Ibid.*)

**What was the next step?**

**The quarterly visitation of the Classes for the renewal of the tickets of membership.**

This, so long and so far as possible, was done by Wesley himself (Works, viii., 256, 257). This was also found to be in accordance with primitive usage, and to be "a most **inoffensive** method of " discipline

\* Four decades ago, so intensely evangelical a clergyman as the Honourable and Rev. Baptist Noel did not venture to hold a Watchnight in his own church, but, year after year, attended that at Great Queen Street Chapel, with a number of his congregation ; so that the large chapel was crowded.

as well as of pastoral oversight (*ibid.*). It gave opportunity for an expurgation of the roll of membership.

The Society Meeting, which was at first held weekly, is incidentally mentioned very early in the history of Methodism.

### **What was the next element in the composition of Methodism?**

A Monthly Prayer-meeting, which was, in the first instance, designed as a preventive against "that miserable bigotry which makes many so unready to believe that there is any work of God but among themselves." The usage was "to read to all who were willing to hear the accounts I received from time to time of the work which God is carrying on in the earth, both in our own and other countries, **not among us alone, but among those of various opinions and denominations**" (*ibid.*). It is greatly to be deplored that this venerable and beautiful institution should not be more popular than it now is. The Monthly Missionary Prayer-meeting is its present representative; nothing is so calculated to keep up the true missionary spirit.

Note.—**True Catholicity is of the very essence of Wesleyan Methodism.**

### **What was the next element in early Methodism?**

The Penitent Prayer-meeting on Saturday evenings. This was intended to meet the case of persons conscious of spiritual declension, "by sins of omission, by yielding to heart sins, or by not watching unto prayer" (*ibid.*). "We endeavoured to bring them back to the great 'Shepherd and Bishop of their souls,' not by any of the fopperies of the Roman Church." This was in beautiful accordance with the apostolic direction. Gal. vi. 1: "Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."\*

### **What was the next step?**

The building of a "Room" at Bristol, for the meetings, in 1739, and

\* This meeting was continued at Great Queen Street Chapel to our own time. It was a touching spectacle to see one of the oldest and most popular clergymen in London, who resided at seven miles' distance, who had been brought up amidst London and Rochester Methodism, take his place on a back seat in the large Queen Street Vestry, and, declining any prominent part in the service, set the example of profoundest humility before God.

the adapting of a building in London, for the same purpose,—“the King’s Foundery,”—in November 1740. Thus the Wesleys began to preach in unconsecrated **buildings**, as well as in the open air. Charles Wesley had been obliged to do this in Frederica, having no church to preach in. The Deed of the first Wesleyan Methodist Preaching House gave the trustees the power of appointing preachers, but on Whitefield’s pointing out to Wesley the inconvenience of rendering himself liable to exclusion from his own premises, it was superseded by another Deed, in conformity with which Wesley settled his chapels upon trustees, with the provision that the two brothers, and whomsoever they might appoint, should have the free use of the premises. Still, for more than twenty years there was no Pattern Trust Deed. In 1763 a form of Trust Deed, or “the Conference Plan,” was published in the *Large Minutes*. This, Wesley says, was “drawn up by three eminent counsel,” giving the power of appointment to Mr. Wesley and the yearly Conference.

N.B.—This is the first intimation of **the continuity of the Conference**; and was doubtless intended to provide against collapse in the event of Wesley’s sudden death.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### SECOND STAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF METHODISM: ITINERANT LAY-PREACHING, ETC., EVANGELISTIC, ELEEMOSYNARY, AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.

##### **What necessitated Lay-Preaching?**

The following is Wesley’s account:—

“When I found it to be **absolutely necessary for the continuance of the work which God had begun** in many souls (**which their regular Pastors generally used all possible means to destroy**), I permitted several of those brethren whom I believed God had called thereto and **qualified** for the work, to comfort, exhort, and instruct those who were athirst for God, or who walked in the light of His countenance. But as the persons so qualified were few, and those who wanted their assistance very many, it followed that most of them were obliged to travel continually from place to place; and this occasioned several regulations from time to time, which were chiefly made in our Conferences.

“**So great a blessing has, from the beginning, attended the labours of**

these Itinerants that we have been more and more convinced every year of the more than lawfulness of this proceeding" (Works, xiii., 197).

Note.—The conservation of "the work of God"—the safety of the new commonwealth—was from the beginning, with Wesley, the highest law.

This step cost Wesley a severe struggle. It was a terrible shock to his own High Churchmanship. "To touch this point," he says, "was to touch the apple of mine eye" (Works, viii., 221). But in his *First Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, published in 1745, he triumphantly justifies Lay-preaching. His grandest argument is, **Jesus Christ Himself was a Lay-preacher, and even the Pharisees, and the Chief-Priests, and the High-Priest never found fault with Him on that account.** He proves conclusively the liberty of preaching in the Old Testament Church, which was such an incalculable advantage in the formation of the New, instancing the request made to Paul and Barnabas at Antioch in Pisidia: "Men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." He then proves, from Acts viii. 4, "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word"—that this liberty of preaching was carried forward from the Old Testament Church to the New. Thus again he takes his firm stand upon the **Scriptures.** He next, as usual, entrenches himself in Church history, proves that **even the papacy itself** sanctions lay-preaching; that the Reformation was mainly effected by unordained preachers; that "in Sweden, in Germany, and Holland, I believe in every Reformed Church in Europe, it is **not only** permitted, but required that **before any one is ordained** he should publicly preach a year or more" (to prove that he has the preaching gift).

In 1790 Wesley strengthens his position:—"We were not the first itinerant preachers in England. Twelve were appointed by Queen Elizabeth to travel continually, in order to spread true religion through the kingdom; and the office and salary still continues, though the work is little attended to. Mr. Milner, late Vicar of Chipping, in Lancashire, was one of them" (Works, xiii., p. 279).

This is a hard hit. But Wesley might have gone further. He might have shown that, **originally, itinerant preaching** formed part of the duty of a **Dean and Chapter.** "A missionary bishop, when converting our ancestors, commonly fixed his see in some spot which was the most convenient abode for him and his attendant priests, who, as opportunity offered, would go to the neighbouring villages to preach the Gospel" (Hook's *Church Dictionary*). Wesley might have still

further fortified his position by the example of St. Cuthbert and his companions, of Wycliffe's travelling preachers, and the Itinerant Lecturers who flourished during the early years of Charles I., under the patronage of Bishop Hall and others. They "had no parochial charge," and were "supported by the contributions of the people;" the suppression of them was the first act of Laud's primacy. Bishop Hall's account of the matter is this:—

"Some persons of note in the clergy, being guilty of their own negligence and disorderly courses, began to envy our success; and finding me ever ready to encourage those whom I found conscionably forward and painful in their places, and willingly giving way to orthodox and peaceable believers in several parts of my diocese, opened their mouths against me, both obliquely in the pulpit and directly at the court, complaining of too much liberty of frequent lecturings within my charge. The billows went so high that I was three times on my knees to his Majesty to answer these great criminations." Hall's latest biographer remarks: "He stands in marked contrast to those who could not tolerate even a Wesley." \*

Wesley then takes his stand boldly on the necessity of the case. When, by the preaching of Whitefield, himself, and his brother, numbers "in several parts were undeniably turned from a course of sin to a course of holiness," the greater part of the clergy of the parishes where this very thing occurred, "spoke of the ministers as if the devil and not God had sent them." So far from "watching over them in tender love" others stirred up the people against them, representing them, even in their public discourses, as fellows not to be tolerated. They did watch, even as a leopard watcheth over her prey.

\* "It is to itinerant preaching, however the ignorant may undervalue it, that we owe the conversion of the Roman world from Paganism to Christianity, our own freedom from the thralldom of Popery in the success of the Reformation, and the revival of Christianity at the present day from the depression which it had undergone, owing to the prevalence of infidelity and indifference" (Douglas's *Advancement of Society*).

"For the first six or seven centuries . . . the bishop sent out some presbyters to be itinerant preachers" (Burns' *Eccles. Law, Art. "Appropriation"*).

"The Saxon bishops used to travel through their dioceses, and, when there were no churches, to preach in the open air. At the beginning of our Reformation, preachers were sent to itinerate . . . where they were most needed; for thus, it was thought, they would be more extensively useful than if they were fixed upon particular cures. Four of Edward the Sixth's chaplains were thus employed, of whom John Knox was one. At that time it was designed that there should be in every diocese, some persons who should take their circuit and preach" (Southey's *Life of Wesley*, vol. i., p. 397).

They drove them from the Lord's table : to which till now they had no desire to approach. They preached all manner of evil concerning them, openly cursing them in the name of the Lord. They turned many of them out of work, persuaded others to do so too, and harassed them in all manner of ways." Wesley puts the case to "men of reason and religion"—

"What could they (through whose preaching these few lost sheep had been gathered into Christ's fold) do in a case of such extreme necessity, when many souls lay at stake? No clergyman would assist at all. The expedient that remained was to find some one among themselves (the converts), and to desire him to meet the rest as often as he could, in order to confirm them as he was able in the ways of God, either by reading to them, or by prayer, or by exhortation.

"God immediately gave a blessing thereto. In several places, by means of these plain men, not only those who had already begun to run well were hindered from drawing back to perdition, but other sinners also from time to time were converted from the error of their ways.

"This plain account of the whole proceedings I hold to be the best defence of it. **I know no Scripture which forbids making use of such help in a case of such necessity.** And I praise God Who has given even this help to these poor sheep, when 'their own shepherds pitied them not'" (*ibid.*).

Thus Wesley makes his brother-clergy substantially the same reply which David made to his elder brother when reproached by him for his enquiries about the challenge of Goliath, "What have I now done? **Is there not a cause?**" Dare anyone maintain that it would have been more Christlike to leave these poor wanderers to perish than to preach to them in unconsecrated places, or that it would have been better to leave them to wander back again or to be worried by their own shepherds, than to ask unordained men to watch over them and feed them? Alas! even mildly High Churchmen say it would!

Note, again, that Wesley takes care to make good, from Scripture, Church history, and Christian common sense, every inch of his ground as he proceeds; and that not only to his own conscience, but before the tribunal of public conscience.

The stout Churchman, Mr. Overton, acknowledges the extreme necessity of the case: that not "a tithe of a tithe" of the population would have attended Divine service but for the Wesleys and Whitefield.

**But were not Wesley's Lay-Assistants deplorably incompetent?**

It must be remembered that incompetence is a matter of comparison. Measured by the importance of the work, the ablest and the holiest Minister is consciously incompetent. Even St. Paul exclaims, "**Who**

is sufficient for these things?" Competence, then, being a question of comparison, there were two parties with whom Wesley's lay-assistants must be compared: 1. Those whom they taught; 2. Those who were their professed or professional teachers. 1. Those whom they taught. Wesley found everywhere some one or more perceptibly in advance of the rest in natural ability or religious knowledge and experience, or in both. A rude, unlettered sailor, cast ashore amongst savages, has suddenly found himself a pioneer of civilisation, and a great religious teacher. 2. And, as to the clergy of the day, Wesley's reply is a triumphant challenge. "**In the one thing which they profess to know, they are not ignorant men. I trust there is not one of them who is not able to go through such an examination in substantial, practical, experimental Divinity, as few of our candidates for holy orders, even in the University (I speak it in sorrow and shame and tender love), are able to do. But oh, what manner of examination do these candidates for holy orders go through, and what proof are the testimonials commonly brought (as solemn as the form is wherein they run) either of their piety or their knowledge, to whom are entrusted those sheep which God hath purchased with His own blood?**" (Works, viii., 221).

Besides, these men only professed to teach what they knew and knew how to teach. If they could only read, they only read the Scriptures and other edifying books. If they had the gift of *extempore* prayer, they prayed aloud; if of exhortation, they waited on exhortation.

Further still, these men were not at any time, in the intention or by the will of Mr. Wesley, rival teachers to the clergy. The first Methodists did not desert the services of their parish church in order to hear the exhortations of a layman. On the contrary, they attended them with far greater regularity than before. Moreover, they were more earnest and prayerful students of the Scriptures than the clergy as a class. Many of them could say, "**I have more understanding than my teachers, because Thy testimonies are my meditation.**"\*

\* A good story is told of a lesson incidentally received by a Minister from a coachman, the first time he rode from Bath to Bristol. The young Minister asked eagerly as to the owners and occupants of the noble mansions near the road. The coachman's invariable reply was, "Don't know, sir." At last the Minister rather contemptuously asked, "My good man, then what do you know?" To which the sufficing answer was, "I know how to drive this coach from Bath to Bristol, and back."

Still further, a vast amount of unsuspected talent was disinterred, which but for Methodism would either have run to waste, or been perverted to the service of sin. Genuine orators and hymnists were exhumed from obscurity, who but for Methodism would have continued "mute" and "inglorious."

But, after all, was it not a grave breach of Church-order for these people to be holding meetings for prayer and reading and religious conversation and instruction in the absence of their authorized pastors?

This is what High Church writers persist in objecting, although Wesley himself supplies a noble answer, which gives a terribly true description of the state of the Established Church at the time. Once for all, I draw your attention to the manly eloquence which Wesley had at his command:—

**"What is this order of which you speak? Will it serve instead of the knowledge and love of God? Will this 'order' rescue those from the snare of the devil, who are now taken captives at his will? Will it keep them who are escaped a little way from turning back into Egypt? If not, how shall I answer it to God, if, rather than violate I know not what 'order,' I should sacrifice thousands of souls thereto? I dare not do it.**

**"Indeed, if by order were meant true Christian discipline, whereby all the members of Christ were knit together in one, and all that are putrid and dead immediately cut off from the body; this order I reverence, for it is of God. But where is it to be found? In what diocese, in what town or parish within England or Wales? Are you rector of a parish? Then let us go no further. Does this order obtain there? Nothing less. Your parishioners are a rope of sand. As few (if any of them) are alive to God, so they have no connection with each other, unless such as might be among Turks or heathens. Neither have you any power to cut off from that body, whilst alive, the dead and putrid members. Perhaps you have no desire, but all are jumbled together without any care or concern of yours.**

**"It is plain, then, that what order is to be found is not among you who so loudly contend for it, but among the very people whom you continually blame for their violation and contempt of it. The little flock whom you condemn is united together in one body, by one Spirit, so that 'if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; if one be honoured, all rejoice with it.' Nor does any dead member long remain, but as soon as the hope of recovering it is past it is cut off."**

In this powerful passage Wesley puts his finger on the absolute and urgent necessity not only for such a movement as he initiated, but also for such an organization as that of Wesleyan Methodism. The National Church was destitute alike of Christian fellowship, Christian discipline, and true Church-life. It was not the realization,

but the contrast, of the picture and pattern of a Church in the New Testament. Instead of being a living organism, as St. Paul represents the true Church to be, it was, apart from its venerable architecture, rich endowments, and for the most part perfunctorily performed services, "a rope of sand." Its members were not "joined together," but "jumbled" together. The Methodist societies, on the other hand, reproduced the primitive Church "order," as described in the Acts of the Apostles. In the National Church there was next to no real pastoral oversight; the Methodist societies were all under systematic spiritual care. Indeed, the clergy saw that the "order," oversight, unity, fellowship, and discipline of the "united societies" was a perpetual rebuke to the Established Church, and that a real Christian Church was being gathered, and was growing up in the land. And the main secret of the instinctive opposition of the clergy to the movement was just that which Bishop Hall put his finger on as the real reason for the suppression of the itinerant lecturers a century before,—“Some persons of note in the clergy, being guilty of their own negligence and disorderly courses, began to envy our success,” etc.

But, if the extreme necessity of the case called for extraordinary means, and if the gross defects of the existing Church-system, and the negligence of those who were entrusted with its administration, called for extraordinary agents, was there nothing in the spirit and manner of the men or the movement which excited opposition?

On the contrary, their bearing towards the clergy, even when "persecutors and injurious," was most uncensorious and respectful. They were entirely unaggressive, except on sin. In this respect the contrast between the Wesleys and the Haldanes in Scotland, for example, and between the Methodists and the early Quakers, was most marked. The Methodists interrupted no Church service, they bearded no clergyman, they made war against no unforbidden customs. "Being reviled, they blessed; being persecuted, they suffered it."

What was the next step?

The institution of the offices of **Poor-steward** and of **Visitors of the Sick** (Works, viii., 263). As in the earliest Church the care of the poor was the primary and principal duty of the first officers of finance, so the first Methodist Stewards were, in fact,

Poor-stewards. But like their patterns at Jerusalem, they had incidental spiritual as well as financial functions (Works, viii., 262). But the Stewards, "being persons generally employed in trade," found themselves quite unequal, even when their number was gradually raised to seven, to do justice to the sick poor, especially in London. So Wesley appealed to the Society for volunteers for this work. "The next morning many willingly offered themselves. I chose six-and-forty of them, whom I judged to be of the most tender, loving spirit; divided the town in twenty-three parts, and desired two of them to visit the sick in each division. It is the business of a Visitor of the Sick to see every sick person in his district thrice a week, to inquire into the state of their souls, and advise them . . . to procure medical advice for them, and to relieve them if they are in want,—to do anything for them which he or she can do" (*ibid.* 263) Two of the rules he gave them are: "Be cleanly in all you do for the sick. Be not nice." This department of Methodism was greatly blessed. Wesley soon found it necessary to set up a dispensary, securing the "assistance" of "an apothecary and an experienced surgeon." This work was from the beginning both extensive and expensive, but signally successful. Wesley also opened a refuge for "feeble and aged widows," which was also a Children's Home. With these he and his Preachers dined "on the same food and at the same table." To this he added a Lending Fund for small and struggling tradespeople.

### What was the next step?

The establishing of Kingswood School in 1740, and of a day school for sixty poor children; which would have been the first Ragged School, but that the ragged were clothed as well as taught. Once a week a meeting was held at the school "to exhort their parents to train them up at home in the ways of God" (*ibid.*). Behold, the first Fathers' and Mothers' Meeting! An early Conference asks, "What shall we do for the rising generation? Unless we take care of this, the present revival will be *res unius atatis*. It will last only the age of a man. Where there are any children in a Society, meet them at least an hour every week. Talk with them . . . at home: diligently instruct and vehemently exhort all parents at their own houses. Preach expressly on education. 'But I have no gift for it.' Gift or no gift, you are to do it; else you are not called to be a Methodist preacher. Do it as you can, till you can do it as you would."

**So Methodism was from the beginning a threefold enterprise—  
(1) Evangelistic, (2) Eleemosynary, (3) Educational ?**

The money by means of which this manifold work was carried on never came into Wesley's own hands. "Nor have I so much," says he, "as 'the beholding thereof with mine eyes;' if I want anything I am relieved even as another poor man." All was received and distributed by Stewards, whose accounts were examined weekly.

**Since, then, Methodism, both as a movement and an organization, could be so readily and triumphantly, and was in fact so lucidly and convincingly defended, how is the violent opposition which it encountered from all classes of the community to be accounted for ?**

Truly, Methodism was from the very first "a sign spoken against," a maligned phenomenon. But this, too, Wesley explains as early as the year 1745, six years after the first Methodist Class-meeting. The first cause was its **uniqueness** at the time of its appearance ; in other words, its **originality**, or re-discovery of the principles of primitive Christianity : it was an "**ancient novelty**," as Wesley felicitously termed the Watchnight.

"There is no other set of people among us (and possibly not in the Christian world) who held them (Methodist principles) **all in the same degree and connection ; who so strenuously and continually insist on the absolute necessity of universal holiness both in heart and life ; of a peaceful, joyous love of God ; of a supernatural evidence of things not seen ; of an inward witness that we are the children of God, and of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in order to any good thought or word.** And perhaps there is no other set of people (at least not visibly united together) who lay **so much and yet no more stress . on rectitude of opinions**, on outward modes of worship, and the use of those ordinances which you acknowledge to be of God. So **much** stress you lay even upon right opinion, as to profess that you earnestly desire to have a right judgment in all things, and are glad to use every means that you know or believe may be, conducive thereto ; and yet not so much as to condemn any man upon earth, merely for thinking otherwise than you do, much less to imagine that God condemns him for this, if he be upright and sincere of heart. On these outward forms of worship whereon you have been laying so much stress as highly to approve of them, but not so much as to lessen your love to those who conscientiously dissent from you herein, you likewise lay **so much** stress on the use of those ordinances which you believe to be of God, as to confess there is no salvation for you if you wilfully neglect them. **And yet you do not judge them that are otherwise minded ; you determine nothing concerning those who, not believing those ordinances to be of God, do, out of principle, abstain**

from them. Another peculiar circumstance of your present condition is that you are newly united together, are just gathered, or rather (as it seems) gathering.

“There is yet another circumstance that is quite peculiar to yourselves. Whereas every other religious set of people, as soon as they were joined to each other, separated themselves from their former society or congregations, you, on the contrary, do not; nay, you absolutely disavow all desire of separating from them. And whereas these congregations to which these separatists belonged have generally spared no pains to prevent that separation, those to which you belong spare no pains (not to prevent, but) to occasion this separation; to drive you from them; to force you on that division to which you declare you have the strongest aversion.

“Perhaps not one in a hundred of those who use the term **Methodist** has any idea of what it means. To ninety-nine of them it is still heathen Greek. Only they think it means something very bad: either a papist, a heretic, or an underminer of the Church, or some unheard-of monster.

“And as much offence as you give by your names, you will give still more by your principles. You will give offence to the bigots for opinion, modes of worship and ordinances, by laying **no more** stress upon them; to the bigots against them, by laying so much; to men of form, by insisting so frequently and strongly on the inward power of religion; to moral men (so-called), by declaring the absolute necessity of faith, in order to acceptance with God. To ‘men of reason’ you will give offence by talking of inspiration and receiving the Holy Ghost; to drunkards.

“What makes even your principles more offensive is this uniting yourselves together. Because this union renders you more conspicuous, placing you more in the eyes of men.”—*Advice to Methodists*, 1745.

From all these causes, and from the intense excitement of the public mind, through the dread of Jacobite conspiracy and invasion, the unpopularity of the first Methodists was such that, had their fate depended on universal suffrage, they would most likely have been swept off the face of the land.

This is the more remarkable as they were neither agitators for, nor advocates of, Church reform or ecclesiastical or political change of any kind. All they aimed at was reformation of the heart and life. They were **singular** in their scrupulous observance of the law; for instance, in the not buying uncustomed goods. They did not declare war against the innocent customs and courtesies of life. They were an altogether inoffensive, neighbourly, uncensorious, kindly, serviceable folk.

**But had they no peculiarities besides their singularly Christian life and spirit?**

Well; in worship “the men and the women sat apart.” “They

had no pews, and all the benches were of the same construction" (Works, xiii., 258-9). Their dress was singular from its plainness. But, their great singularity was in the suddenness and the strikingness of the reproduction of primitive Christianity. This strangeness to the eighteenth century never wore off till the century itself was worn out. In 1788 Wesley significantly entitles a tract on Methodism, *Thoughts on a Late Phenomenon*; that "phenomenon" having already lasted more than half a hundred years. But its most novel feature, in Wesley's view, was that it was a purely unsectarian revival (Works, xiii., 266).

The early annals of Methodism are chronicles of wonderful labour, success, and persecution chiefly instigated by the clergy. Wesley said, as truly as pungently, "The war against the Methodists was more vigorously carried on than that against the Spaniards" (Works, xiii., 316). "Almost the whole body of the aged, experienced, learned clergy are zealously engaged against it, and but a handful of raw young men engaged in it."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THIRD STAGE OF METHODIST ORGANIZATION—DRAWING UP OF RULES FOR THE SOCIETY—THE YEARLY CONFERENCE—THE CHRISTIAN LIBRARY—WESLEY'S PATRIARCHAL GOVERNMENT.

IN 1743, Wesley printed **General Rules of the United Societies**, introduced by an account of the **Nature and Design** of those Societies. These Rules have never been materially modified from that day to this.

**What was the third stage in the development of the Methodist Organization?**

The holding of the first **Conference**. This, again, was at the beginning a purely incidental gathering. It took place in London in August 1744, five years after the formation of the first Society Class. Its incidental character is indicated by its name "conference," and by the quiet way in which Wesley records it in his *Journal*: "Monday, 25th, and the five following days, we spent in conference (with a small c), with many of our brethren come from several parts, who desire nothing but to save their own souls and those that hear

them." There were present the two Wesleys, four other clergymen—one from Wales, one from Gloucestershire, one from the Isle of Man, one from Kent—and four Lay—"assistants." The subjects of "conversation" (the memoranda are headed *Minutes of Conversations*) were: "(1) What to teach; (2) How to teach; (3) How to regulate doctrine, discipline, and practice." The object of the first question was to secure **Scripturalness, clearness, firmness, and consentaneousness** of doctrine. The questions discussed were points of experimental and pastoral theology: the New Testament doctrine of the Fall of the Human Race in the First Man, and the countervailing work of Christ—Justification, Regeneration, and Sanctification.

In examining these doctrinal positions one is struck by (1) The fact that all doctrine is drawn directly from the fountain head—the Scriptures; (2) The lucidity, compactness, precision, balance, and judiciousness of their exhibition of truth, as compared with the very best Church-preachers of the time, such as Archbishop Secker, Bishops Sherlock and Butler, Archdeacon Jortin, and Seed. You will look in vain throughout their works for any such perception or presentation of the truth.

Two days were devoted to doctrine at this little Council in Moorfields. On the third day "we began to consider Points of Discipline." They make a brave beginning. They go straight to the root of the matter, like practical, earnest, sagacious men, who have a great work on hand. Their first question is, "**What is the Church of England?**" And the answer is as bold and as blunt as the question, and as directly to the purpose:

"According to the twentieth Article, the visible Church of England is **the congregation of English believers**, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered."

And the second question and answer are like unto the first:—

"Who is a **member** of the Church of England?"

"A **believer**, hearing the pure word of God preached, and **partaking** of the sacraments duly administered in that Church."

—That Church, of course, as just before defined.

This is a very Broad-Church view, though very diverse from, and altogether adverse to, the modern Broad Church view of Dean Stanley and his school; which substitutes PROFESSION for belief, and makes no account whatever of the preaching of "the pure word," or the due-ness of the administration of the sacraments.

Q. 3. "What is it to be zealous for the Church ?

A. "To be earnestly desirous of its welfare and increase. Of its welfare, the confirmation of its present members in faith, hearing, and communicati and of its increase by the addition of new members."

Questions 5 and 6 are very significant :

"How should we behave at a false or railing sermon ?

A. "If it only contain **personal** reflections, we may quietly suffer it. I blaspheme the work and Spirit of God, it may be better to go out of church. either case, if opportunity serves, it may be well to speak or write to Minister."

"How far is it our duty to obey the Bishops ?

A. "In all things indifferent. And on this ground of obeying them, we sho observe the canons, **so far as we can with a safe conscience.**"

"Do we separate from the Church ?

A. "We conceive not. We hold communion therewith for conscience' sake, constantly attending both the word preached and the sacraments administe therein."

"What, then, do they mean who say 'you separate from the Church' ?

A. "We cannot certainly tell. Perhaps they have no determinate meani unless by 'the Church' they mean themselves ; that is, **that part of the cle who accuse us of preaching false doctrine.** And it is sure **we do her separate from them**, by maintaining that which they deny."

"But do you not **weaken** the Church ?

A. "Do not those who ask this, by 'the Church' mean **themselves** ? We not purposely weaken any man's hands. But accidentally we may, thus **They who come to know the truth** by us will esteem such as deny it less t they did before. But the **Church**, in the proper sense, **the congregatio English believers**, we do not weaken at all."

"Do you not entail a schism in the Church ?

A. "We believe **the body of our hearers will . be thrust out, or that t will leaven the whole Church.** But we cannot with a good conscie neglect the present opportunity of saving souls, whilst we live, for fea consequences which may possibly or probably happen after we are dead."

The immediate sequence of this first Conference is very remarka It is thus recorded by Wesley : "The next week we endeavourec purge the Society of all that did not walk according to the Gos By this means we reduced the number of members to less th nineteen hundred. **But number is an inconsiderable circumstar** May God increase them in faith and love " (*Journal*, August 1744).

This shows how little Wesley cared for sounding and specious statistics, in comparison with the purity of the members. This fact is also shown by one of the Questions and its Answer: "May one relapsed into gross sin, confessing his fault, be readmitted into the Society?" "Not as a member till after three months, but he may be permitted to stay (at the Society Meetings) as a stranger" (*Minutes*, vol. i., p. 11). This restriction was not intended as penance, but as probation. The offender must undergo a new term of trial. Here was no Donatistic severity or purism.

We also see that, so to speak, the core of Conference is the **Conversation on the State of the Work of God**, which now takes place at both the Pastoral and the Representative Sessions.

We have to note here (1) the Church Principles aimed at and acted on:

1. **The predominant principle is that every ecclesiastical obligation, including obedience to Bishops and observance of canons, must be subordinated to the salvation of souls.**

2. "The Church of England, in the proper sense," is the aggregate, "the congregation, of English believers" — whether within or without the Establishment. Such, at this early date, was the declaration of Methodist Church-principles by the two Wesleys and their clerical and lay associates.

3. These ten brave yet humble men were conscious that they were no "Robber Synod." They knew that they had received a higher ordination than the Bishops could either confer or delete—a direct commission from the Head of the Church. They felt that the enterprise to which they were committed was no mere foray upon the kingdom of darkness, but was a reconquest and a reoccupation. They had already realized an assuring earnest of success. For, startling as had been the tidings of salvation to the multitudes to whom they had proclaimed it, large numbers had believed it. And the new fellowship which they had founded was also felt to be the satisfaction of an urgent want. Living souls yearned for a spiritual Society, such as the parochial system, as at that time worked, did not even attempt to supply. Yet were they far greater than they knew. That little conclave, in the disused Foundery, was the first of a series which has already extended over a hundred and forty-four years; with many offshoots and affiliations, directing and administering to thousands of Churches, in almost every nation under heaven.

The next year a second Conference took place, this time at Bristol, at which eleven persons were present, besides the Wesleys, only one being a clergyman, the Welsh cleric Mr. Hodges; the rest being six

itinerant preachers and one private member. These are stated to have been "as many as could be present."

The first principle laid down was one which is in force to this day—**absolute freedom of speech** on the part of every member.

Again they took up the **doctrine of Justification**; reading together Baxter's *Aphorisms concerning Justification*. Then the doctrine of **Assurance** was discussed with admirable judiciousness and delicacy of handling; next, the subject of **Grace anterior to Justification**. Then the questions were asked: "Do not some of our assistants preach too much of the wrath and too little of the love of God?" with the most important problems of Pastoral theology, such as, "Does not the truth of the Gospel lie very near both to Calvinism and Antinomianism?" "Where can we come to the very edge of Antinomianism?" To which the most candid and conciliatory answers are returned. Another most important question and answer followed:

"In what manner shall we preach entire sanctification?" A. "Scarce at all to those who are not pressing forward. To those who are, always, by way of promise, drawing rather than driving."

On the third day, the question was discussed, "**Is Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Independent Church-government most agreeable to reason?**"

The form of the question is significant: "most agreeable to reason." This, of course, takes for granted that no one of the three is contrary to Scripture. And the answer is to the same effect. The "**Independent**" is shown to be the **rudimentary** form of Church-government; the **Presbyterian** form to be the natural and reasonable coalescence of contiguous Churches; "**Episcopacy**" is shown to be, in like manner, a natural development of Presbyterianism, so soon as a plurality of local ministers require a president or superintendent. Every student of Church history knows that this was the actual course of events; though this fact was far from being so plain then as research and discovery have since made it.

According, then, to the young Fathers of the first Bristol Conference, Independency, Presbyterianism, and Episcopacy are but successive stages of Church-government. Independency they rightly noted as an arrested growth.

Wesley's fourteen Lay-Assistants were required to **preach twice daily**, to spend **seven hours of the twenty-four** in study and in prayer, and **five** in pastoral visitation. A catalogue was drawn up

of the theological, medical, scientific, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, historical and poetical works, which should constitute the libraries in London, Bristol, and Newcastle.

Wesley had no intention that his preachers should remain uncultivated. In 1749 he began to publish for their benefit, and that of other people, *A Christian Library*, consisting of **Extracts and Abridgments of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity** which have been Published in the English Tongue. In fifty volumes. He also presented each of his Lay-Helpers with £5 worth of books. In the selection of these "**Pieces of Practical Divinity**," he consulted the man whom he thought the most competent adviser, the earnest and accomplished Independent Minister, Philip Doddridge. No one who has not read these fifty volumes can have any idea of the wealth of practical theology they contain : Patristic, Catholic, Anglican, Puritan, and Christian Platonist. Happy the young preachers who fed upon such spiritual and intellectual diet ! and happy the people to whom they ministered !

At this and subsequent Conferences during Wesley's life, the duty, and the best manner, of teaching the first principles of personal religion to the children of the members is insisted on at great length ; and it is appropriately added : "**Do this in earnest, and you will soon find what a work you take in hand in undertaking to be a Travelling Preacher.**"

Strict rules were laid down for preventing "improper persons from insinuating into the Society." Three great evils were especially to be attacked : evil-speaking, smuggling, and bribery at elections. Stringent rules were drawn up as to the personal deportment of Lay-Helpers. Golden maxims were laid down, such as : "A Methodist Preacher is to mind every point, great and small, in Methodist discipline ;" "Act in all things, **not according to your own will, but as a son in the Gospel** ;" "Do not affect the gentleman ;" "Beware of clownishness, either in speech or dress." Obtrusive individualism was seen to be altogether out of place in a brotherhood of Pastors.

The Conference consisted of John Wesley and those whom, from year to year, he might invite to confer with him and with each other. But, as soon as, in 1763, the right of appointing to Methodist Preaching "Houses" was vested in Mr. Wesley and the "Yearly Conference of the People called Methodists," the imperative necessity was felt of legally fixing the sense of the word "Conference," determining its individual constituents, and providing for its continuity ; "defining

what persons are to be members of the Conference, and how the body is to be continued in succession ; and to identify it." At length, in 1784, Wesley being already in his eighty-first year, the case was submitted to counsel, who advised that " Mr. John Wesley should prepare and subscribe a **declaration** for that purpose, to be enrolled in the Court of Chancery for its safe custody, naming the present members, and prescribing the mode of election to fill vacancies." This Deed was entitled "**The Rev. John Wesley's Declaration and Establishment of the Conference of the People called Methodists.**" This Deed, which was enrolled in the Court of Chancery on March 9th, 1784, gave to the **Conference** a legal definition, which till that time it lacked. The Courts subsequently affirmed the validity of the Deed, and thus gave to the Conference a legal recognition.

This important instrument is rightly termed "**The Deed of Declaration.**" In giving to the Conference, in the eye and under the hand and seal of British law, a corporate identity, continuity, and power of self-perpetuation, it to all intents and purposes fixes the relations of the Conference to the Wesleyan Methodist Preachers and people, and to Connexional property. It assigns to the Conference not only the power of **appointing** Preachers to all Wesleyan Methodist chapels, but also the power of determining who are or are not Preachers ; of admitting "on trial" and "into full connexion," and of **expulsion**. It gives the Conference the power to "delegate any member or members of their own body to act with full power in Ireland, or in any other parts out of the Kingdom of Great Britain."

By this Deed the Conference was constituted the Governing Body of the United Societies of Methodists everywhere ; which, in their turn, were regarded as one compact community. Each Conference must, first of all, before the election of its President, fill up the vacancies in its number which have occurred since its last meeting, and it must determine the time and place of its next meeting.

The duration of each Conference was limited to three weeks, in order that the Societies might not suffer from a prolonged absence of their pastors. The restriction to three years of the appointment of the same Minister to the same chapel, by securing a community of Ministers to all the various Societies, secured them Connexional cohesion ; and, along with their common government and common standard of doctrine and system of mutual help, gave to the whole a tense tenacity of tissue, and prevented its degenerating into a loose aggregate of independent congregations. By securing the itinerancy,

it also secured freshness and circulation, and guarded against a local congestion of talent and wealth, which would damage the health and threaten the disintegration of the body. It prevented Ministers and Societies alike from settling on their lees.

Thus this important document was not only a "**Declaration**," but also an "**Establishment**."

The yearly reunion of Wesleyan Ministers could not but have a perpetually reuniting effect. No sooner do the Brethren find themselves together, blending their voices in an uplifted hymn, such as—

"And are we yet alive,  
And see each other's face?"

than the blessed oneness is realized; and in the full-voiced parting hymn—

"Blest be the dear uniting love  
That will not let us part!  
Our bodies may far off remove,  
**We still are one in heart!**"—

the unity of the Brotherhood is felt to be assured.

### What was the next step?

The introducing a gradation of office amongst the Preachers, by the distinction between **Assistants** and **Helpers**, corresponding to that between **Superintendents** and their colleagues at the present time; the Superintendents being regarded as Mr. Wesley's **Assistants**, their colleagues being **Helpers** to them and him. When a territorial division became necessary of the great outfield into **Circuits**, with more than one Preacher appointed to some, the special responsibility must be assigned to one of their number, who should be the "over-seer," "superintendent," or "**bishop**" (the titles only differ as English, Latin, and Greek terms of the selfsame signification) of the other shepherds, as well as of the flock. Hence arose a primitive Episcopacy of the purest type; and in the same incidental, common sense manner in which the earliest Episcopacy emerged.

Isaac Taylor says of the **Legal Conference**—the Hundred—"The members of such a council must feel that their election to it is a distinction, and they **should** feel too that this honour brings with it **no trivial responsibilities**" (*Wesley and Methodism*, p. 225). Hence there have been only two instances in our own time in which the speeches in acknowledgment have accepted the election as a recognition of **personal excellencies and services**, and made no reference

to the solemn "trust" which the honour carried with it. "In the election of the President and Secretary . . . the Legal Conference is requested to elect the Minister nominated by the greatest number of the general body. Since 1816, when this method of election was agreed to, it has always done so; but it was then further agreed that, in the very unlikely case of the Legal Conference negating such nomination, the persons authorized shall proceed to a second nomination, and 'the result of that nomination should, in like manner, be submitted to the decision of the Hundred who are the Legal electors'" (*Conference Journal*).

**What, then, was the general character of the Government of the United Societies during Mr. Wesley's lifetime?**

It was a **Patriarchal Government** of a number of connected communities, each of which was endowed with as full self-government as was consistent with their mutual connexion.

**Was this Patriarchal form of Church-government warrantable?**

It was absolutely necessitated by the very nature and history of **Methodism**; the consolidation, coherence, and permanence of which could not be secured in any other way. It was as natural as it was necessary. Methodism was, under God, the creation of John Wesley; and he could say to the Methodists as a "people," "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you." It is not enough to admit that there is much to be said in favour of Wesley's patriarchal authority; nothing can be reasonably said against it.

Strictures have indeed often been pronounced on Wesley on the ground of the paternal authority which he exercised over his people. His ready and complete justification to all the "children of wisdom" lay in the patent facts and the imperative necessities of the case. With his rare frankness and openness he, at an early Conference, himself started the question: "What power is this which you exercise over both the Preachers and the Societies?" He answers: "I will tell you **all I know of the matter, taking it from the very beginning.**" He then shows how it originated with the very origin of Methodism itself:—

"Two or three persons **desired me** to advise and pray with them. . . . More and more then **desired me** to meet with them, till they were increased to many hundreds. The case was afterwards the same at Bristol, Kingswood, and New-

castle, and other parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The desire was on their part, not mine. My desire was to live and die in retirement.

“Here commenced my power—namely, a power to appoint when and where and how they should meet, and to remove those whose lives showed that they had not a desire ‘to flee from the wrath to come.’

“Some of them said, ‘Sir, we will subscribe quarterly. You want a hundred and fifteen pounds to pay for the lease of the Foundery,’ etc. I suffered them to subscribe. And when the Society met, I asked, ‘Who will take the trouble of receiving this money, and paying it where it is needful?’ One said, ‘I will do it, and keep the accounts for you.’ So here was the first Steward.

“It was I myself, not the people, who chose these Stewards, and appointed to each the distinct work wherein he was to help me, so long as I desired. And herein I began to exercise another sort of power—namely, that of appointing and removing Stewards.

“After a time, a young man . . . came and desired to help me as a son in the Gospel. Soon after came a second, and then a third. These devoutly desired to serve me as sons, and to labour when and where I should direct. Observe! these, likewise, desired me, not I them. But I durst not refuse their assistance. And here commenced my power to appoint each of these.

“Each had a power to leave me when he pleased. The case continued the same when the number of Preachers increased. On these terms and no other we joined at first. On these we continue joined. But they do me no favour in being directed by me. I have nothing for it but trouble and care, and often a burden I scarce know how to bear.

“In 1744 I wrote to several clergymen, and to all who then served me as sons in the Gospel, to meet me in London, and to give me their advice concerning the best method of carrying on the work of God. And for several years I wrote to those with whom I desired to confer, and they only met me in London or elsewhere.

“Observe, I myself sent for them of my own free choice. And I sent for them to advise, not govern me. And as it was merely in obedience to the providence of God, for the good of the people, that I first accepted this power, which I never sought, it is on the same consideration, not for profit, honour, or pleasure, that I use it this day.

“But if you can tell me any to whom I may transfer this burden, who can and will do just what I do now, I will heartily thank both them and you. Preaching twice or thrice a day is no burden to me at all; but the care of all the Preachers and all the people is a burden indeed.”

What exquisite simplicity! It is perfectly plain that nothing but the personal influence—spiritual, moral, and intellectual—of the Founder of Methodism himself, perpetually brought to bear on each part of the wide Connexion, by the indefatigable and systematic exercise of his visitorial powers, and of his facile, firm, yet flexible and gentle pen—which gave him a kind of Connexional ubiquity—could possibly have held together and moved and moulded the vast and

locally scattered multitude which was pulsing with a new-found life. Had Wesley been so weak as to allow self-asserting, theorizing men, like Alexander McNab, at Bath (Tyerman's *Wesley*, iii., 303, etc.), to take advantage of the prestige of Wesley and of Methodism as a base of operations for their own notions and personal plans, then the stout cable of Connexional unity, bearing the *Broad Arrow* of Providence and Grace, would soon have been ravelled out into tow.

And where was the hardship? The whole affair was purely voluntary. No one need be bound by it a moment longer than he pleased. Mr. McNab, for example, was at perfect liberty to set up as an Independent Minister if he preferred Congregationalism to Connexionalism, and could induce a sufficient number of people to elect him as their Minister; but it is ridiculous for anyone to imagine that he has a right to fasten upon a Connexion a parasitical Independency of his own.

Of course Wesley could have no successor in this power. But, without this oneness of Founder and Father, Methodism itself could by no means have attained the wonderful oneness which is amongst its most striking characteristics. Methodism could not have "many fathers," without also having many forms. The United Societies, "from the beginning," were both historically and organically "in connexion with the Rev. John Wesley." He was recognized and felt to be their living centre. It was around him, as the proclaimer and embodiment of a recovered Gospel, that this new "people," who before that "were not a people" at all, but "a rope of sand," were gathered and grew together. For Methodism was emphatically and essentially "a gathered Church;" and Wesley was the great gatherer, who garnered as fast as he gathered.

Isaac Taylor just hits it when he describes Wesley as "far too fervently intent upon an object beyond himself, to entertain any care about that semblance of egotism or ambition which the pursuit of that object could not fail to impart to his mode of acting. Why is it, then, that he has been spoken of as if some mystery overshadowed that bright head, or as if that countenance, beaming as it does with childlike love, was the covering of an abyss?" (*Wesley and Methodism*, p. 85).

The fact is, to object to Wesley's patriarchal authority is, practically, to object to the coherence, consolidation, and continuance of Methodism.

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## CHAPTER V

## FOURTH STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT—TERRITORIAL DIVISION INTO CIRCUITS — THE COVENANT SERVICE — RUDIMENTARY CONNEXIONAL FINANCE—KINGSWOOD SCHOOL.

**What was the next step in the development of Methodism?**

The dividing Great Britain and Ireland into "Circuits," and the appointment of Preachers to each, with definite duties, one of whom had charge over the rest. The division of England and Wales into Circuits first appears at the Conference of 1746, when we find seven such territorial distinctions. This distribution of the whole country into Methodist Circuits was a step of great significance and consequence, as both a sign and a means of occupation and settlement. It was at once an evangelistic and an economic arrangement: evangelistic, in pursuance of Wesley's resolution, based upon experience, "to strike no blow which he could not follow up;" economic, as a practical reply to the question, "With whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness?" The Societies from Cornwall to Cumberland, and from the Channel to the Tweed, absolutely demanded shepherding.

This Methodist mapping out of the land was also, in the first instance, a military mapping. Its object was—the more effective aggression on the heathenism of the country, as well as the securing of the conquests already made. Its outspoken text was: "Know ye not that Ramoth in Gilead is ours? and shall we be still and not take it out of the hand of" irreligion and vice?

**What were the duties of an Assistant?**

"(1) To see that the other Preachers in his Circuit behave well, and want nothing. (2) To visit the Classes quarterly and deliver Tickets. (3) To take in or put out of the Society, etc. (4) To keep Watchnights and Lovefeasts. (5) To hold **Quarterly Meetings**, and therein diligently to inquire into both the temporal and spiritual state of each Society. (6) To take care that every Society be **duly supplied with books.**" Here Wesley interjects: "O! why is this not regarded? The Societies are not half supplied with books. O! exert yourselves in this. Be not weary. Leave no stone unturned." (7) To send from every Quarterly Meeting a circumstantial account

of every remarkable conversion and remarkable death to London. (8) To take exact Lists of his Societies every quarter, and send them up to London. (9) . . . To overlook the Accounts of all the Stewards" (Works, viii., 319).

### What were the qualifications of an Assistant?

"Walking closely with God, and having his work greatly at heart, understanding and loving **discipline**, ours in particular," etc. (*ibid.*).

With Wesley it was an anxious question, "What can be done in order to a closer union of our Helpers with each other?" He saw that this was essential to the unity of the Societies. So long as the **internal relations** of the Pastoral Conference are preserved in a healthy condition, there is little danger of a serious secession of members. Wesley advises his **Helpers** to "pray for a desire of union;" to "speak freely to each other;" to "beware how they despised each other's gifts;" to "never speak slightingly of each other in any kind;" to "defend one another's characters in everything, so far as consists with truth," etc. (Works, viii., 324).

### What were the qualifications for the office of Helper?

Before 1784, each **Helper** had to pass one year of Probation, after that date four years, before he was admitted "into full connexion," and during this period he was not allowed to marry.

Before any one can be received as a Probationer, he must have made proof of his gifts and grace as an "Exhorter," now termed a **Local Preacher**. But for many years, this was not imperatively required.

It will be seen at once that these Helpers and Assistants were required to manifest every qualification for, and to discharge every function of, the Christian Ministry indicated by St. Paul in his address to the Elders at Miletus, and in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus. They passed through a searching probation, first as **Exhorters** amongst their own people, then as Preachers on trial, under close superintendence. They were instructed to regard and demean themselves as "pupils" of, and to serve as sons in the Gospel, the elders with whom they were associated. They passed through far more searching examinations as to their mental, moral, and spiritual fitness for the work of the Christian Ministry than did the clergy of the time. They were far more versed in experimental and pastoral theology. They were under far more efficient directions

as to their theological studies. They were far more strictly set apart from all secular occupation and means of livelihood than either the clergy or Dissenting ministers; not being allowed so much as to sell "pills, drops, or balsams." Finally, at the close of their probation, they were solemnly ordained "by" and into "the Presbytery;" not, indeed, as yet, by "laying on," but by, what was just as effective, though not quite so symbolically significant, the "lifting up" of the hands of the "Presbytery." The Methodist "Preachers," even in John Wesley's time, were as much more "like the elders" or "bishops" of the Apostolic age, as the Methodist United Societies were more like the pattern and ideal of the New Testament Church than the English Establishment was or is.

The Brethren also were required to exercise over each other the most faithfully mutual vigilance. The fifth question at every Conference after that of 1767 was: "Are there any objections to any of the Preachers?" who were named one by one.

Wesley was careful to pass every candidate for the office through a fine sieve. The first series of enquiries related to experience: "Do they know God as a pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them?" Then as to character and habits: "Are they holy in all manner of conversation?" Then as to "gifts for the work": "Have they, in some tolerable degree, a clear, sound understanding?—a right judgment in the things of God?—a just conception of salvation by faith?" "Has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly?" And, lastly, as to "fruit": "Are any truly convinced of sin, and converted to God by their preaching?" As long as these three marks concur in any one, we believe he is called of God to preach.

The Helpers were solemnly admitted into the brotherhood at the "Conference," when some other points were put to them, such as: "Are you going on to perfection? Do you expect to be perfected in love in this life? Are you groaning after it? Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and to His work? Do you know the Methodist plan? Will you diligently instruct the children in every place? Will you visit from house to house? Are you in debt?"

**When was the Quarterly Meeting mentioned above instituted?**

The institution of the Circuit Quarterly Meetings was of great importance. This Church court took definite shape in 1750, when

John Bennet, one of the Assistants, was desired by Conference to "send us up a plan for conducting such meetings" (*Minutes*, vol. i., p. 709, Ed. 1862). Its constitution was not defined till 1852.

**May it be affirmed, then, that the United Societies had all the essential elements of a Christian Church?**

They obviously had, in a much higher degree than the Established Church itself, possessing remarkable efficiency in the three important constituents of Church-life, of which the Established Church was deplorably destitute: (1) Fellowship and mutual edification; (2) Discipline and order; (3) Vigilant pastoral oversight. In short, they formed a much more highly organized and more intensely animated Church. But most of the members went to church for the sacraments.

**How then could Wesley maintain that his Societies were not Dissenters?**

His strong position was: "We are not Dissenters in the only sense which our law acknowledges—namely, those who renounce the service of the Church." This definition of Dissenters accords with that given in the *Church Dictionary* of the late prominent High Churchman, Dr. Hook: "Dissenters—Separatists from the Church of England, and from the service and worship thereof, whether Protestants or Papists."\* Accordingly Dr. Hook does not reckon the Methodists as Dissenters, though he does regard as such "Presbyterians," "Congregationalists," and "Baptists." The Methodist Societies in Wesley's time formed a more vitalized and more highly organized Church, within the larger and looser Church,—not a Church outside and beside the Church. What Wesley aimed at, and to a great extent did, was the truly Apostolic service of setting in order the things that were wanting in the Established Church, and supplying the deplorable lack of service of its ordained and endowed clergy.

**But what was Wesley's authorization for undertaking and sustaining such a work as this?**

The supreme authorization of (1) A clear, loud, many-voiced,

\* This, however, has been altered in the last edition (1887), a new article, by Lord Grimthorpe, being significantly substituted for Dr. Hook's.

piercing outward call, the piteous bleating of Christ's wandering, scattered, hungry, and ill-tended sheep ; (2) The constraining love of Christ ; (3) The combined ability and willingness to do a work for want of which the Church of God in England was seen to be languishing to the very verge of extinction, and which no one else both could and would attempt ; (4) The solemn conviction that God had sent him on this errand and entrusted him with this commission, and that to neglect it was to lose his own soul, and cause by his unfaithfulness the loss of many thousands more "for whom Christ died." This conviction he again and again avows. Take, for example, his Sermon on Schism : "I know God has committed to me a dispensation of the Gospel ; yea, and my own salvation depends upon preaching it. 'Wee is me if I preach not the Gospel.' If, then, I could not remain in the Church without omitting this . I should be under the necessity of separating from it or losing my own soul." (5) God's signal blessing upon his labours.

**Did Wesley in later years institute any other service which gave to Methodism a distinctive feature ?**

Yes, **The Covenant Service.** His own account of it is as follows :—

"In August 1756, I mentioned to our congregation in London a means of increasing serious religion, which had been frequently practised by our forefathers—the joining in a Covenant to serve God with all our heart and all our soul I explained this for several mornings following. On Monday, at six in the evening, we met for that purpose at the French Church in Spitalfields. After I had recited the tenor of the Covenant proposed, in the words of that blessed man, Richard Alleine, all the people stood up in token of assent, to the number of about eighteen hundred. Such a night I scarce ever knew before. Surely the fruit of it shall remain for ever. On the 11th, I explained once more the nature of such an engagement, and the manner of doing it acceptably to God" (Works, ii., 339).

After a while, New Year's Day was felt to be the most suitable season for such a service, as such a service was felt to be most suitable for New Year's Day. Afterwards, the afternoon of the first Sunday in the year was found to be the most convenient time for the assembling of the entire Society in a town for this solemn purpose (Works, iv., 325). The last of many entries in the *Journal* with regard to this service occurs under the date Sunday, Jan. 3rd, 1790 :—"I suppose near two thousand met at the new chapel (City Road) to renew their covenant with God—a scriptural means of grace which is now almost everywhere forgotten, except among the Methodists."

Happily this "means of grace" has never been forgotten among the Methodists; and "the fruit of it," from the time of its institution to the present, has been incalculable. The **Renewal of the Covenant** is proved to be, to the individual believer and the assembled Church, the renewal of spiritual strength, the renewal of "youth like the eagle's," the renewal of the inner man, year by year, as the "outer man" moves onward to decay.

This annual solemnity is most affecting and impressive. The solemn Form of Confession and Covenanting, with introductory exhortation and advice, has been for some time in the hands of most of those who propose to join in the service; some have kept it by them as a constant memento. The sermon on the Sunday morning has usually a more or less direct bearing on the approaching solemnity. During the service Covenant hymns are sung, composed for the occasion, such as that by one of the Wesleys,—

"Come, let us use the grace divine,  
And all, with one accord,  
In a perpetual Covenant join  
Ourselves to Christ the Lord."

The prepared and expectant soul not in vain looks upward for an answer of peace:—

"We never will throw off His fear  
Who hears our solemn vow:  
And if Thou art well pleased to hear,  
Come down and meet us now."

That Form confronts the soul at once with the awful and inevitable alternative of choosing **life or death**, and with its own spiritual helplessness. It puts its "sin before" it. The soul is "shut up" to salvation from the guilt and damnation of sin by Christ alone, and is urged to an immediate and definite capitulation to Christ—a frank, full, firm, and, by God's grace, final surrender to Christ as its Saviour and Sovereign Lord; and to place itself "within the bond of the Covenant," that it may secure the blessings of the Covenant. Then all kneel, and the Minister, as the mouthpiece of every one—the whole gathered Church—repeats the words by which the soul commits itself to entire consecration. Another hymn is sung, and then the engagement is sealed by the Supper of the Lord. Whilst each successive company is partaking, the rest have time for profound meditation and earnest prayer.

The influence and effect are often such as Wesley again and again describes in his *Journal*, expressed most fitly in the verse :—

“O'erwhelmed with Thy stupendous grace,  
I dare not in Thy presence move;  
But breathe unutterable praise,  
And rapturous awe, and silent love.”

The newly-pledged servant of Christ goes forth with a deepened sense of responsibility, feeling, “**Thy vows are upon me, O Lord! I have said that I would keep Thy word.**” And, at the season when Nature makes a new advance, and the lengthening light begins to be perceptible, the heaven-bound pilgrim sets forth afresh, with girded loins, and “chalice of salvation.”

Moreover, some of the best purposes of Confirmation, rightly conceived of, are realized in this recurring service. It affords a most favourable opportunity for urging seriously-disposed young members of the congregation, and others who are “not far from the Kingdom of God,” to take the decisive step. It has thus become one of the watercourses in the garden of the Lord, by which the children of His Church spring up “as willows;” when “one shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord” (Isa. xlv. 4, 5).

### What was the next step?

The initiation of a system of **Connexional Finance**. This, too, was marked by all the incidentality, extemporization, and gradual development of the other parts of the system. Connexional Finance must be distinguished from Circuit Finance. Towards the close of the first decade of Methodist history, Wesley writes: “It is certain that we have barely the first outlines of a plan with regard to our temporal concerns;” and, again: “I had no design, for several years, to concern myself with temporals at all.” Yet Wesley found that his fifty years' war with the heathenism of the three kingdoms could not be carried on without the material “sinews of war.” And even as the Church of Pentecost found the regulation and the smooth administration of its finance inextricably interlaced with its inmost spiritual fellowships, so it was with the two members of Wesley's London Class-meetings (Messrs. Ball and Watkins), who insisted upon the initiation of a system of stated money-contribution for paying for the lease and the repairs of the Foundery, and for evangelistic undertakings; and it was at a meeting in Bristol, when the little Society

had, perforce, resolved itself into a committee of ways and means for discharging the debt upon its meeting-place, that the spiritual office of Lay-Class-Leader was evoked, like the visitorial diaconate of the earliest Church. Thus, too, Methodist fellowship and Methodist finance became the homogeneous warp and woof of its tenacious tissue; the weekly statement of experience being conjoined with the weekly contribution, as God had prospered; and the Quarterly Visitation by the Minister being simultaneous with the quarterly contribution for "carrying on the work of God." The dissociation of Methodist finance from the Methodist fellowship is to be earnestly deprecated. From the beginning Methodism has had no endowment but the grateful givings of its people. Its exchequer is the industry, the thrift and the generosity of its duteous children. Hence its marvellous financial elasticity in times of disruption, and during depression of trade.

When the immediate exigencies connected with the places of meeting were provided for, the surplus contributions of the Classes, the collection at the Lord's Supper, and occasional donations from the better-circumstanced members and hearers, were distributed, according to the existing need, among the various evangelistic, philanthropic, and educational undertakings of the community. At the first Conference, the rule was laid down: "Take no money of any one. If they give you food when you are hungry, or clothes when you need them, it is good; but not silver or gold." Like the Twelve and the Seventy, they had "no scrip." Like the Apostles, after Pentecost, they had no coin, even for charity to a begging cripple. For the first twelve or thirteen years the Circuits were so large and the Preachers so few, that their whole time was spent in moving from place to place. Nelson and Wesley himself were glad to avail themselves of the hospitalities of the heath, and browse on blackberries. They were not unfamiliar with "spare fast which oft with God doth diet." When, by degrees, Circuits were subdivided and Preachers multiplied, and celibacy of the Preachers became the exception instead of the rule, some roof must be found to shelter the Preacher's wife and family. Their necessities were met with greater or less stringency, and according to the varying means and notions of the people amongst whom they lived.

But at the Conference of 1752, "it was agreed that the Preachers should receive a stipend of £12 per annum, in order to provide themselves with necessaries." Before this period "the Preachers received no money, except what was voluntary from individuals and a little from the Stewards, to pay their travelling expenses" (Myles's *Chronological History of Methodism*).

But, by the year 1769, it was found expedient to equalize the financial pressure by making the "allowance" of £10 a year for each Preacher's wife a Connexional, not a Circuit charge. This was distributed amongst the Circuits according to their estimated capabilities, so that the question of a Preacher's suitability for any particular station should not be complicated with that of his family claims.

But the shape assumed by this first essay at Connexional Finance was curious, almost comic, in its crudeness. Individual Preachers' wives, stationed in Circuits which could not find them even the scantiest maintenance, were by name allotted,—we can scarcely say **allocated**,—either in whole or in part, to some Circuits which could.

When a man without private means, who is entirely devoted to preaching the Word and taking the oversight of souls, and is forbidden to earn money in any other way, is yet allowed to marry—although he may forego the title Reverend and the name of Minister—he cannot do without a lodging for his wife. Hence, by the year 1770, we begin to find a **Preacher's house**, at least in the principal Methodist centres; and in 1774 the rule was made that "every Circuit shall find the Preacher's wife a lodging, coal, and candles, or £15 a year" to procure them for herself. Hence, by degrees, every "Circuit town" acquired its Methodist manse or parsonage; none the less Connexional property because it was called "the Preacher's house."

Next came the necessity for providing food for the children; and, in Wesley's last Conference, 1790, the stringent Minute is repeated from "former Minutes": "Those Circuits that do not provide for their Preachers and their children (except Scotland, Ireland, and Wales) shall have no more Preachers sent to them, for the time to come, than they will provide for."

As early as the year 1763, the necessity for "a **General Fund**," subsidiary to Circuit-revenue, was found to be absolute. The question was put in Conference: "How may we raise a **General Fund**? Answer: By a yearly subscription, to be proposed by every Assistant when he visits the Classes at Christmas, and received at the visitation following." The purposes to which the Fund was to be devoted were clearly stated. (1) The extinction of Chapel-debts too large for the local Societies to discharge, but not too large to be dealt with by "the whole body of Methodists." (2) The second object named is touchingly significant of the stratum of society from which the main body of the Preachers was raised, as well as of the common-sense way in which the Conference looked at matters. "In several parts of

England there are Local Preachers who have gifts and graces equal to those of most itinerants. Why then do they not travel?" They are willing so to do; but they are afraid of bringing a scandal upon the Gospel, because they have contracted debts which, though very small, they are not yet able to pay. So they are bound hand and foot. Shall we not set them at liberty? We cannot buy a Preacher for ten thousand pounds, but we may release one for ten or twelve. Can any money be better bestowed?" (3) Another object was the carrying out of evangelistic operations in remote and destitute corners of the United Kingdom, such as "the north-west of Ireland and the north of Scotland." It was resolved: "Let none be excluded from giving something; be it a penny, a halfpenny, or a farthing." The moneys contributed were to be brought to the next Conference and delivered to the General Stewards, and by them distributed according to the allotment agreed upon. Mr. Wesley also stated the case in writing to the better circumstanced members of the Society.

Thus the **General Fund** served the purposes of (1) **A Chapel Fund**, for paying off Chapel debts; (2) **A Home Mission Fund**; (3) **A Fund** for setting free for the Lord's "service" willing and well-qualified labourers, who were standing all the day idle because shackled with small debts; (4) **A Fund** for meeting the expense of legal protection from the violence of mobs and clerical magistrates, every suit in the King's Bench costing from £50 to £60.

### What was the next economic movement?

The providing for the education as well as the maintenance of the Preachers' children. This, too, was an obvious and urgent necessity; a claim of justice as well as of compassion. The itinerant who, in the service of the Connexion, spent nine-tenths of his time away from home, could not but look to the Connexion to take charge of his children. For this purpose, in 1748, the Colliers' School at Kingswood — which eight years before had been handed over to Wesley, unfinished, with all its pecuniary burdens and liabilities, by Whitefield on his leaving for America — was enlarged. Some years previously Wesley had been persuaded to connect with the Colliers' Day School a Boarding School, for the children of Methodist families (Myles' *Chronological History of Methodism*, p. 66). Towards the cost of the enlargement "an unknown lady" contributed £800.

At Kingswood Wesley began a great educational experiment on the

broadest principles. His first principle was the seclusion of youth, as far as possible, from all evil influence. He would have boys "simple concerning evil." In this, as in all other matters, he took the public into his confidence, publishing a full though "Short Account of the School in Kingswood." The basis was broad, the curriculum widely inclusive, comprising "every branch of useful learning: reading, writing, arithmetic, English, French, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, history, geography, chronology, rhetoric, logic, ethics, geometry, algebra, physics, music." Wesley does not mention among the lesson-books for very little children Church history, experimental divinity, and religious biography; but it is very significant that children of eight years of age were set to study Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, and at nine the *Pilgrim's Progress* (the great worth of which production of unlettered genius Wesley was one of the first to recognise), and Castellio's Latin *Kempis*; whilst they were to translate into Latin *The Manners of the Ancient Christians*. Amongst the class-books for boys of ten were the Lives of Halyburton, the Presbyterian Minister, and De Renty, the Roman Catholic. Lads of eleven were set to study Law's *Christian Perfection*, and boys of twelve his *Serious Call*.

To every Preacher's daughter and every Preacher's son who could not be admitted into the School a sum was allowed for maintenance and education, which in later years was fixed at £12 per annum.

Kingswood School was a wonderful advance upon any school in the kingdom, for boys of from six to twelve years old, in the range and quality of its secular instruction, as well as in its arrangements for bringing up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Yet few educationists will doubt that the poor boys were put under too high pressure. Certainly, no prince of the blood was ever subjected to a severer culture; but as to bodily exercise, gardening had to do duty for games and gymnastics, and fasting every Friday, instead of horse exercise and hunting.

Kingswood School was one of Wesley's most cherished schemes, which he clung to with all his indomitable strength of will. It was the only one of his plans worked out from a definite programme. With regard to it he characteristically remarks: "Surely the importance of this design is apparent even from the difficulties which attend it. I have spent more money and time and care on this than almost any design I ever had, and still it exercises all the patience I have" (*Journal*, ii., 301).

In 1756, incidental and individual contributions proving quite insufficient, he instituted a Connexional collection for its support.

But it was not before 1773 that Preachers' sons were sent there, while two Preachers' daughters were paid for at another school near Bristol, which Wesley regarded as, "perhaps, the best boarding-school for girls in Great Britain ;" and others subsequently at a school at Amesbury.

Wesley himself drew up, with great care and with unrivalled power of compression, a series of grammars, and other school-books and manuals, striving to the utmost to smooth and shorten the pupil's pathway to the gold-fields of sound and serviceable scholarship. The course of study was singularly encyclopædic ; the object being to give youths at least a fair start in the pursuit of the great objects of life,—the glorifying God, and the service of the Church and commonwealth ; according to the inscription which he placed on a tablet on the front of the building : **In Gloriam Dei Optimi Maximi, in Usum Ecclesiæ et Reipublicæ.**

It is to be noted that Wesley, as in so many other important points, anticipated the changes for which the present age is too eager to give itself the credit, by including in his school-course physical science and music. The boys were also taught to reason, to read aloud and to recite.

The School was well-manned, there being six masters for fifty boys. Three of the first six became clergymen of note. Wesley, of course, found himself obliged to relax the sternness of its discipline. As to its prospects of support, he indicated his own confidence by the Hebrew inscription (underneath the Latin one), **Jehovah-Jireh.**

In shaping this rudimentary Connexional Finance, necessity was the mother of invention, and practice often outran prescription—the zeal of one Society or Circuit provoking very many, and "the forwardness of others" correcting the backwardness of some.

The financial system, thus incidentally initiated, is readily recognised as the outgrowth of the Pauline principle, laid down in 2 Cor. viii. 14, 15 : "By an equality: your abundance being a supply at this present time for their want, that there may be equality: as it is written, He that gathered much had nothing over ; and he that gathered little had no lack."

Wesley taught his people that giving to the cause of God and man is an essential part of true Christianity. He trained them in it, and showed that giving is one main guarantee against declension in personal piety and in Church purity. "Religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the

world in all its branches. How, then, is it possible that Methodism, that is the religion of the heart, though it flourishes now as a green bay-tree, should continue in this state? For the Methodists in every place grow diligent and frugal—consequently they increase in goods . . . ‘Is there no way to prevent this continual declension of pure religion?’ There is one way, and there is no other under heaven. If those who ‘gain all they can,’ and ‘save all they can,’ likewise ‘give all they can,’ then the more they gain the more they will grow in grace” (Works, xiii., 260, 261).

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LEAVENING EFFECT OF METHODISM — RETENTION OF ITS ORIGINAL SPIRIT—OPPOSITION, PERSECUTION, AND MISREPRESENTATION—SPONTANEITY OF STRUCTURE.

Was Wesley’s main and original object, the leavening the Church and nation, to any appreciable extent accomplished during his own life-time?

It was. So early as 1748, he says of his own birthplace, and the parish which gave his father so much trouble and so little satisfaction :

“I see plainly we have often judged amiss when we have measured the increase of the work of God, in this and other places, by the increase of the Society only. The Society here is not large, but God has wrought upon the whole place. Sabbath-breaking and drunkenness are no more to be seen in these streets; cursing and swearing are rarely heard. Wickedness hides its head already. Who knows but, by-and-by, God may utterly take it away?” (*Journal*, ii., 102).

And, in 1749, an Irish clergyman writes to him :—

“I must own it gives me infinite satisfaction to find that you have spoken to so good an effect in our town and neighbourhood. My church is more frequented than ever it was; and I have the pleasure of seeing greater decency, and more of zeal and attention, than I could have dared to promise myself; which has also this effect upon me—that I find myself better disposed than ever to distribute to those who attend my ministry such good as may yield them comfort here and happiness hereafter. I see this work of yours, through God’s blessing, thus successfully carried on without any ill-will or jealousy. Your Society here keeps up well. I frequently attend the preaching though I am much reflected on for it.

“Michael Poor, lately a Roman, who is now of your Society, read his recantation on Sunday last” (*ibid.*, 154, 155).

If all the clergy had acted as did this sensible Irish clergyman, what incalculable benefit would have been the result !

Wesley lived to see the most marvellous reformation of manners in large tracts of country, the disappearance of brutalising amusements and barbarous customs over large districts ; as of **wrecking** in Cornwall. In the Roman Catholic South of Ireland, as well as in the more Protestant Leinster, so early as 1749, he rejoiced to find "considerable numbers brought, not from one opinion to another, but from darkness to light ; from serving the devil to serving the living God." "This," he adds, "is the point, the only point, for which both I and they (his Preachers) think it worth our while to labour" (*Wesley's Short History of the People called Methodists*).

**Did the original character of Methodism change materially during Wesley's lifetime ?**

It certainly did not. He guarded with the most sensitive and resolute jealousy against any such change. He especially feared lest Methodism should lose its brave and fervent spirit of aggressive evangelism, and settle down into a respectable fixture in the land, proud of its numerical and social strength and political influence. He warns his followers : "The greatest hindrance to this (Home-missionary energy) you are to expect from rich or cowardly or lazy Methodists. But regard them not" (*Large Minutes*). His idea was that every Methodist "Preaching-house" is to be a base of Home Missionary operations. So late as 1781 he bears grateful testimony to the single-minded zeal of his fellow-labourers : "About one hundred and thirty of my fellow-labourers are continually employed in the same thing. **We all aim at one point, as we did from the hour when we first engaged in the work ; not at profit, any more than at ease, or pleasure, or the praise of men ; but to spread true religion as we are able, through the three Kingdoms : that truly rational religion which is taught and prescribed in the Old and New Testament namely, the love of God and our neighbour. We leave every man to enjoy his own opinion and his own mode of worship. And we give the right hand of fellowship to every lover of God and man, whatever his opinion or mode of worship be**" (*Short History of the People, etc.*).

Still later (1786) he writes : "I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist, either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be

the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out" (Works, xiii., 258).

But were not the Methodists justly charged with supposing their singularities to be of the very essence of the Christian religion?

They were — unhappily for contemporary Christendom; most happily for themselves and for those who adopted those essential singularities. Such was Wesley's own reply to Bishop (afterwards Archbishop) Secker, who had addressed him under the assumed name of John Smith. He accepted this charge verbatim: "Our singularities (if you will style them so) are fundamental, and of the essence of Christianity:" that is, as he explains, the "singularities" on the ground of which the parish pulpits of the land, from St. Mary's, Oxford, downwards, had been closed against him. Wesley shows, by incontrovertible facts, that the offensive singularity for which so many of the clergy set the mobs on the Methodists, as if they were "mad dogs," was the preaching "such a love of God and man, as produces all inward and outward holiness, and springs from a conviction wrought in us by the Holy Ghost of the pardoning love of God." Their grand peculiarity was their insisting that the possibility, the necessity, and the actuality of an experienced and practised Christianity had not died out with the age of miracles. It was their pertinacious disturbance of ignorance, indifference, and practical infidelity under the shadow of the Church, which aroused against them the alarmed outcry of a drowsy orthodoxy.

"The moping owl does to the moon complain  
Of such as, wandering near her secret bow'r,  
Molest her ancient solitary reign."

It is thus that Wesley states the question to Bishop Secker: "We are at length come to the real state of the question between the Methodists, so called, and their opponents. Is there such a thing (if we divide the question into its parts) as faith producing peace, and joy, and love, and inward as well as outward holiness? Is that faith which is productive of these fruits wrought in us by the Holy Ghost or not? And is he in whom they are wrought necessarily conscious of them?" (Works, xii., 71, 72).

But for this fierce and determined opposition of the clergy, alike the leavening and the converting effectiveness of Methodism must have been much greater than it was. This Wesley himself puts most

powerfully : " Why have not thousands more been reformed ? Yea, for every one who is now turned to God, why are there not ten thousand ? Because you and your associates laboured so heartily in the cause of hell ; because you and they spared no pains either to prevent or to destroy the work of God. By using all the power and wisdom you had, you hindered thousands from hearing the Gospel.

By inventing or countenancing or retailing lies—some refined, some gross and palpable—you hindered others from profiting by what they did hear. Many who began to taste the good word, and run the way of God's commandments, you, by various methods, prevailed on to hear it no more. What a harvest might we have seen before now (1745) if all who say they are ' on the Lord's side ' had come, as in all reason they ought, ' to the help of the Lord against the mighty.' Yea, had they only **not opposed** the work of God might there not have been at this day a hundred thousand in England more than there are now ? The rich, the honourable, the great, we are thoroughly willing, if it be the will of our Lord, to leave to you. Only let us alone with the poor, the vulgar, the base, the outcasts of man." With that delicate, subtle satire of which he was a master, Wesley adds : " The sharpest adversaries (of Methodism) whom I have hitherto known (unless one might except a few honourable men whom I may be excused from naming) were the scum of Cornwall, the rabble of Bilston and Darlaston, the wild beasts of Walsall " (Works, viii., 238).

**Then, were there no real stumbling-blocks, to the onlooking public, in early Methodism ?**

Wesley fully admitted that there were. He asks : " Do you delay fixing your judgment till you see a work of God without any stumbling-block attending it ? That never was yet, nor ever will. ' It must needs be that offences will come.' " Not only irregularities, but also improprieties and drawbacks, have attended every great spiritual revival and upheaval. No one can carry out an enterprise of wide and lasting good who is not prepared to have temporary discredit. But, after all, the Wesleys' prayer was answered :—

**" Not for my fault or folly's sake,  
 The name or mode or form I take,  
 But for true holiness ;  
 Let me be wronged, reviled, abhorred,  
 And Thee, my sanctifying Lord,  
 In life and death confess."**

But was not the suddenness of the conversions effected by Methodist preaching a just reason for questioning the reality of the work ?

It might have been, had not their unmistakableness and permanence been as remarkable as their suddenness. But being unmistakable and permanent, their very suddenness was one of the strongest possible manifestations of the finger of God. Moreover, there was no slurring, no healing of the hurt slightly ; the depth and intensity of repentance prepared for the swift-coming salvation. And "fruits meet for repentance" sprang up with all the rapid abundance of an Arctic summer, when the sun, so long hidden, goes not down. The sudden supernatural change was authenticated by the abiding fact ; as "the sign" unto the shepherds that the angelic choristers were not illusions was "the Babe found lying in the manger ;" and as the no longer paralytic bounding homewards, with his bed upon his back, was the proof that his sins were forgiven.

Wesley constantly disclaimed faultlessness, either in Methodism or Methodists, in his system or his people. For example : "Admit that they do not think right as to some of the **appendages** of religion yet ought you not to bless God for giving these outcasts of men to see at least the **essence** of it? Nay, to be living witnesses of the **substance** of religion, though they may still mistake as to some of the circumstances of it. Allow that they have some **particularities of opinion**, and some little odd customs, for *humanum est errare et nescire*" (Works, ix., 176).

Of the four chief peculiarities of Methodism, one—the forming Societies—had been anticipated, without objection, though on a much smaller scale ; the other three have happily ceased to be peculiarities, having since been adopted, to a large extent, by other Christian bodies — namely, preaching out of doors, preaching *extempore*, and lay-preaching.

The freedom from any **affectation** of singularity is another fair feature of the resemblance of the early Methodists to the early Christians. The picture of the primitive Christians in that gem of ancient Church literature the *Epistle to Diognetus*, presents a striking likeness to the early Methodists:—"The Christians are not distinguished from other men by country, by language, nor by civil institutions ; for they neither dwell in cities by themselves, nor use a peculiar tongue, nor lead a singular mode of life. They follow the usages of the country in dress, food, and the other affairs of life. **They obey existing laws, and excel the laws by their lives.**"

With regard to the extravagances of some of his followers, Wesley acted most judiciously. At the Conference of 1761 he says: "I strove to guard both Preachers and people from running into extremes on the one hand or the other." On which Myles remarks: "These extremes were (1) Despising the work altogether on account of the extravagances of some who were engaged in it; (2) Justifying these extravagances as though they were essential to it."

But, after all, ought not Wesley and his fellow-labourers to have doubted their call, commission, and authorization to do this work, when the clergy and the bishops opposed them?

Wesley's answer to this question is very simple and straightforward: "I entreat reasonable men to weigh this thoroughly, whether the fact does not plainly prove the call? whether He Who enables us thus to save souls alive, does not commission us so to do? whether, by giving us power to pluck these brands out of the burning, He does not authorize us to exert it?" (Works, viii., 468).

Seeing that the preaching of the Wesleys was after 1738 so wonderfully successful, how is their signal want of success during the first few years of their ministry to be accounted for?

Wesley's own account of it is this:—

"1. From the year 1725 to 1729, I preached much, but saw no fruit of my labour. Indeed it could not be that I should, for I neither laid the foundation of repentance, nor of believing the Gospel; **taking it for granted that all to whom I preached were believers**, and that many of them 'needed no repentance.' 2. From the year 1729 to 1734, laying a deeper foundation of repentance, I saw a little fruit. But it was only a little; and no wonder, for I did not preach faith in the blood of the Covenant. From 1734 to 1738, speaking more of faith in Christ, I saw more fruit of my preaching and visiting from house to house than ever I had done before; though I know not if any of those who were outwardly reformed were inwardly and thoroughly converted to God. 4. From 1738 to this time, speaking continually of Jesus Christ, laying Him only for the foundation of the whole building, making Him all in all, the First and the Last, preaching only on this plan, '**The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the Gospel,**' the Word of God ran as fire among the stubble. It was 'glorified' more and more, multitudes crying out, 'What must we do to be saved?' and afterwards witnessing 'By grace we are saved, through faith.'"

This most instructive autobiographic passage is Wesley's own explanation of the marvellous success of his preaching, after years of inefficient earnestness.

**What has struck you most in this review of the origin of Methodism and the gradual shaping of its organization ?**

Its being apparently so incidental and spontaneous.

This is, indeed, most striking, significant, and instructive, presenting, on the one hand, so strong a contrast to the mode in which many notable Church movements have arisen, and many Church organizations have been formed ; and, on the other, a signally clear and close parallel to the mode in which the primitive Church took shape and substance. Contrast with this the action, first, of earlier, then of later systems and communities. Calvin, for example, elaborated a Church-polity, which was adopted by Knox and other great Church-leaders and organizers. Loyola minutely matured his plan of an Ecclesiastical Society before he began to form that Society. Since Wesley's time the "Irvingites," starting Christianity *de novo*, assumed the sounding designation, **The Catholic Apostolic Church** ; and, after much study, travel, and inspection of old historic Churches, deliberately set themselves to reconstruct the Christian Church from its very foundation. Under supposed "inspiration," after elaborate investigation and theorization, they elected Twelve Apostles, and arranged a carefully graduated hierarchy, and a rounded polity and ritual, proceeding on the hypothesis that a perfect organization will secure a high-toned vitality. Similarly, though much less ostentatiously, the Plymouth Brethren laid great stress on a puristic and rigidly rectified Church-organization. And these pretensions to a perfect and Divine organization were most logically combined with attacks upon other Churches. Wesley calls attention to the happy contrast which Methodism presented, in this respect, to foregoing Reformations and Revivals. He points to the Reformers—

"rejecting so many of the doctrines and practices which the others accounted the most sacred ; and their continual invectives against the Church they separated from, so much sharper than Michael's reproof of Satan. . . . The **Quakers** . . . over and above their open, avowed total separation from the Church and their vehement invectives against many of her doctrines, and the whole frame of her discipline, spent their main strength in disputing about opinions and externals. The case was nearly the same when the **Baptists** first appeared in England. They immediately commenced a warm dispute, not concerning the vitals of Christianity, but concerning the manner and time of administering one of the external ordinances of it. And as their opinion thereof totally differed from that of all the other members of the Church of England, so they soon openly declared their separation from it, not without sharp censures of those that continued therein.

"The same occasion of offence was, in a smaller degree, given by the **Pres-**  
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**byterians and Independents**, for they also spent great part of their time and strength in opposing the commonly received opinions concerning some of the **circumstantials** of religion; and, for the sake of these, separated from the Church. **We do not dispute concerning any of the externals or circumstantials of religion**" (Works, viii., 242, 243).

That Methodism was not the result of a previous plan, Wesley conclusively shows at the very beginning of his *Plain Account of the People called Methodists*, the object of which is to let the public "know . . . **the occasion of every step they (the Methodists) have taken, and the advantages reaped thereby.**" He says:—

"I must premise that, as they had not the least expectation, at first, of anything like what has since followed, so they had no previous design or plan at all; but everything arose just as the occasion offered. They saw or felt some impending or pressing evil, or some good end necessary to be pursued. And many times they fell unawares on the very thing which secured the good or removed the evil. At other times, they consulted on the most probable means, following only common sense and Scripture; though they generally found, on looking back, something in Christian antiquity likewise very nearly parallel thereto" (Works, viii., 248).

"Everything arose just as the occasion offered. They saw or felt some impending or pressing evil, or some good end necessary to be pursued." Is not this an exact, though unintentional and unconscious, description of the mode in which the successive steps were taken in the organization of the Primitive Church?—*e.g.*, the election of a successor to Judas, and the institution of the diaconate. "At other times, they consulted on the most probable means" (see the account of the first Christian Conference at Jerusalem). Seldom has an undesigned historical parallel been more complete; seldom has history so naturally repeated itself. When the Spirit had descended on the early Church, and on Wesley, the grand prerequisite, equipment, and authorization for acting was in full force, as said Samuel to Saul: "Thou shalt be turned into another man. And let it be when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serves thee, . . . for God is with thee" (1 Sam. x. 6). Methodism, like the primitive Christianity of which it was the revival, had, from the first, a pliant, elastic, and expansive framework. It was not crystallised with mathematical rigidity. Revived Christianity in Great Britain, Ireland, and America, in the eighteenth century, was as free to evolve its organization, according to "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," as uncorrupted Christianity was, in the first century, in Palestine or Asia Minor, or on the European continent.

Seldom has the wise saying been more markedly illustrated than in the history of Methodism :—

“ There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough hew them how we may.”

But does it not seriously detract from Wesley's reputation as an organizer to find that his system was not the product of sagacious forecast or of organizing genius ?

In the first place, Wesley was totally indifferent to his own reputation as an organizer or to the credit of Methodism as a symmetrical work of art. He himself confesses that he cared no more for the “reputation” of either the workman or the work, from this point of view, “than for the reputation of Prester John” (Works, xiii., 198).

Alexander Knox, a most philosophical and erudite student of Church History, who knew Wesley intimately and admired him greatly, declared that no one who was competently acquainted alike with him and with affairs, could ever imagine him to be capable of conceiving and contriving such an organization as that of Methodism.

In fact, the teleology of Church History, the argument from design, as in natural theology, has no more striking illustration than the providential shaping of the system of Wesleyan Methodism. Wesley's genius for organization was a single eye to the glory of God, a childlike docility, and strong practical English sense. He never affected or pretended to, but disclaimed, originality, and he frankly gave others the credit of the most important suggestions. And the fact that Wesley aimed at one grand result, and, under the pilotage of Providence, reached another grand result, in nowise detracts from the greatness of the man, or discounts the indebtedness of mankind to so grand a benefactor of his race. Who attempts to sneer Columbus out of his renown by saying, “Aha, he set sail in search of a new route to India, and he only found America!” How many of the great discoveries in geography and in physical science have been hit upon by brave and noble men when they were in search of something else. Jacob's hypocritical answer to his father's question, “How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?”—“Because the Lord brought it to me” (Gen. xxvii. 20), was, in Wesley's case, the simplest truth.

Yet these apt arrangements, suggested or supplied by Providence in

answer to prayer, were not determined on without devout deliberation. Wesley's whole policy is embodied in that noble hymn—

'I wait Thy guiding eye to feel.

\* \* \* \*

Jesus, let all my work be Thine,  
Thy work, O Lord, is all complete;  
And pleasing in Thy Father's sight,  
Thou only hast done all things right.

"Me if Thy grace vouchsafe to use,  
Meanest of all Thy creatures, me,  
The deed, the time, the manner choose,  
Let all my fruit be found of Thee;  
Let all my works in Thee be wrought,  
By Thee to full perfection brought.

"Here, then, to Thee Thy own I leave," etc.

No one was more impressed with Methodism as an organization, or with Wesley as an organizer, than was Isaac Taylor. He says: "The Wesleyan Institute has shown itself a masterpiece of social organization. In dealing with whatever may belong to a process of organization, or of marshalling a host, Wesley has never been surpassed by civil, military, or ecclesiastical machinists. Nor has he been surpassed by any general, statesman, or churchman in administrative skill—that is to say, in the faculty of adapting himself and his movements to the circumstances of the moment, without compromise of his authority or personal dignity, and with the least possible damage done to his theoretic consistency" (*Wesley and Methodism*). Flexibility of form and fixedness of principle must ever be the organic law of a living Church; a judicious and a deft adjustment of organism to the moulding pressure of a changing environment. Whilst the details given by St. Paul to the Church at Corinth, and to Timothy and Titus, prove that Church-order and Church-government are essential, yet the purely incidental way in which our knowledge of the structure of the Apostolic Church crops up shows how much is left to "men of wisdom and understanding to discern the times, to know what Israel ought to do." Hooker well says: "It is no more disgrace for Scripture to have left a number of other things free to be ordered at the discretion of the Church, than for Nature to have left it to the wit of man to devise his own attire and not to look for it as the beasts of the field have theirs." But changes which tend to alter the essential character of the Society are to be resisted to the utmost.

## CHAPTER VII.

WHOSE FAULT WAS IT THAT METHODISM WAS NOT ORGANICALLY ATTACHED TO THE NATIONAL CHURCH? — JOHN WESLEY'S CHURCH PRINCIPLES.

Seeing that Wesley was such a loyal adherent and such a duteous son of the Established Church, how did it come to pass that Methodism was not vitally and organically attached to the Established Church, of which it was, in the main, an outgrowth?

It was the fault, in the first instance, of the disorganized and worldly state into which that Church had fallen. The discreditable and dangerous dissensions in both Houses of Convocation, and between both Houses, arising out of and betraying the want of homogeneity and harmony in the body of the clergy, had rendered the closing of that Church-council necessary to the national peace. The best and ablest Churchmen, *e.g.* Archbishop Secker and Bishops Warburton and Hurd, confessed the expediency of that Church-mutilation in order to the tranquillity and integrity of the Church itself. But there remained no regular and recognised body by which the bishops and other dignitaries, and the representatives of the clergy in general, could take cognizance of, or counsel with regard to, such a movement as Methodism. Each bishop and each parish-priest was left to his own individual discretion, taste, or temper. Secondly, there was a deplorable lack of administrative competence and concert in the Church leaders of the day. They were as unable to deal with the revived religion of the nation, as with its disgraceful and portentous irreligion and vice. Had the walls, bulwarks, and towers of the national Zion been in anything like good repair, and had there been extant a modicum of Christian patriotism or of ecclesiastical engineering skill amongst the great churchmen of the time, the organization of the United Societies might have been fitted into that of the Establishment, as the suburban outworks of Carthage were dovetailed into the fortifications of the city itself. But Keble's exclamation on surveying the Established Church in his own younger days :—

“O holy mountain of my God,  
How do thy walls in ruin lie!”

was far more tragically true in Wesley's day. The compact, solid, symmetrical organization of Methodism could not be a colossal lean-to of the crumbling and dilapidated ecclesiastical fabric. Yet, had there been in the hierarchy “men of understanding to discern the times, to

know what Israel ought to do," these widespread Societies might have served the purpose of a military colony, and the Methodist "preaching-houses" have been made a line of frontier fortresses, to keep in check the terrible irruptions of vice, vulgarity, and homebred heathenism. But the Church which could count amongst its preachers, apologists, and administrators such men as Secker, Gibson, Warburton, Butler, Horsley, and Horne, found no man master of the situation. Besides, there was no slight ground to fear lest the new wine of Methodist life, in its fermenting, generous strength, would have burst the time-eaten, many-patched, loosely-stitched skin-bottles of the Church. "The new cloth" of Methodist organization would have strained the old garment into more unseemly ravelment. Mr. Abbey thinks that Wesley's preaching of the doctrine of original sin and of future punishment could never have been tolerated in the Established Church (*English Bishops*).

In 1787 the question was addressed to Wesley: "Why do not the clergy, whether in England or Ireland, avail themselves of the Methodist Preachers? who desire no pay for their services in repressing error and wickedness of every kind, and propagating truth and religion. Upon what rational principles can this be accounted for?" To this Wesley good-naturedly yet grimly replied: "To give a complete answer to this question would require a whole treatise. Many, both of the English and Irish clergy, are not only learned but truly religious men, and as such are an honour to their profession. I speak only of those who are of a different character, be they many or few. Let them wear the cap whom it fits. . . Horace observed long ago:—

"Oderunt hilarem tristes, tristemque jocosus"  
(*The sad detest a merry fellow, and the humorous the sad*).

"Accordingly, grave and solemn men (though too few are guilty of this fault) dislike many of the Methodist Preachers for having nothing of that gravity and solemnity about them. Jocosus clergymen, on the other hand, cannot but dislike those that are steadily serious; and those who love to take 'a cheerful glass' are not fond of such as are strictly temperate. You need go no further than this consideration to have a clear answer to the question. But this may be more fully accounted for upon Christian principles. What says our Lord to the first preachers of the Gospel, and in them to all their successors? 'If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.' Does not this give us sufficient reason to expect that, if we are not of the world, all the world, all who know not God, whether clergy or laity, will be so far from accepting our assistance that they will

sincerely hate us. 'But do not many clergymen who are **not pious** men acknowledge that the Methodists do good, and encourage them to persevere therein?' They do; but observe **how far** they would have them go. They wish them to repress outward sin. They are well pleased that their parishioners grow more diligent and honest, and are constant attendants on the Church and sacraments; nay, they are glad that they are brought to practise justice and mercy—in a word, to be moral men. But the truth is, the Methodists know that all this is nothing before God; that whoever goes thus far and no farther is building upon the sand. If the Methodist Preachers would preach outward religion and no more, many clergymen would not only encourage them therein, but likewise cordially join them" (Works, xiii., 261-3. Ed. 1872).

Several High Churchmen frankly admit that Wesleyan Methodism was "**thrust out**" of the Church, though Mr. Overton denies it. We have only space for one of these testimonies. Canon Curteis, in his Bampton Lectures on *Dissent in its relation to the Church of England*, tells the University of Oxford: "The great Wesleyan revival of personal religion, which began within the Church of England, but which the leaders of the Church at that time had not the fidelity or the skill to know how to employ for her advantage; and so they **thrust it out** from among them, to swell the ranks and revive the dying enthusiasm of Dissent."

**Then, did no one essay or suggest any accommodation?**

The most serious and practical attempt in this direction was that made by the Rev. Mr. Walker of Truro. The first principle which he laid down for Wesley's guidance was noble, and was admirably accordant with Wesley's own practice: "**To keep in full view the interests of Christ's Church in general, and of practical religion; not considering the Church of England or the cause of Methodism, but as subordinate thereto.**"

Wesley could truly answer: "This advice I have punctually observed from the beginning." But when the well-intentioned Cornish clergyman came to practical details, he proved nothing but his own utter incapacity to deal with the difficulty. His heal-all was this: "That **as many of our Preachers as are fit for it be ordained, and that the others be fixed to certain Societies, not as Preachers, but as readers or inspectors.**" This, of course, demanded the surrender of two points vital to Methodism—**Lay-preaching** and **Itinerancy**; as Wesley showed him in the most practical manner. He instances Cornwall

itself, where there were already (1756) thirty-four Methodist Societies, and but four Preachers. Supposing two of these were ordained and settled in curacies, and two settled, and silenced, as to the exercise of their preaching power, what was to become of the thirty Societies left unprovided for, and who was to preach to the thirty-two Societies if the other two Preachers "were henceforth forbidden to preach"? "Who shall feed them with the milk of the Word. The Ministers of their parishes? Alas! they cannot; they themselves neither know, nor live, nor teach the Gospel. These readers? **What authority have I to forbid their doing what I believe God has called them to do?**" (Works, xiii., 198-200). Thus Wesley takes the bull by the horns.

Walker maintained that, "Lay-preachers being contrary to the constitution of the Church, the thing is plainly inconsistent with the discipline of the Church of England; and is, in one essential point, setting up a Church within her, which cannot be of her. There is a continual war kept up between you and any regular clergyman, who cannot in conscience fall in with this measure cannot take them by the hand. And so there must be two disunited ministrations of the word in the same place."

Mr. Walker, whilst denying to these unordained "readers" liberty of prophesying, would yet have entrusted them, as "inspectors," with the most searching and stringent disciplinary functions, not unlike those of Presbyterian "ruling elders." The ordained Methodist Preachers were to be regarded as a kind of inferior clergy; none of them was "to be advanced to any considerable preferment." Charles Wesley unhistorically admitted: "Lay-preaching, it is allowed, is a partial separation." Walker was one of the very best parish clergymen in England; yet this was the best counsel he could give, the best which the most earnest and practical thought of the time could suggest. He utterly blamed Wesley for calling Lay-preachers to "conference," thus making them his counsellors. "It has been a great fault all along to have made the **low people** of your council."

Thus, the most feasible plan for the organic attachment of Methodism to the Established Church amounted to the stultification and arrest of the entire movement, by the condemnation and abandonment of its most effective appliances and agencies—Lay-preaching, the Itinerancy, and the Yearly Conference; and involved the leaving pastorless more than seven-eighths of the Societies already formed. In other words, it was proposed to change Methodism, from a grand evangelistic aggression, into a mild and mongrel Pastoral-Aid Society, and to leave

ungarnered nearly the whole of the rich harvests already reaped. Happily for the kingdom and for the world, Wesley was too earnest and practical a man, and was too convinced of his Divine commission and **raising up**, to do anything so pitifully and so wastefully absurd.

Mr. Walker, however, went a step further ; he insisted that Wesley was bound to give up the Methodist Societies "to their several Ministers," particularly instancing Mr. Vowlez, curate of St. Agnes, Cornwall, a young clergyman whose zeal and faithfulness as a preacher Wesley greatly admired. Walker puts his point to Wesley thus : "If you believed Mr. V—— to be a gracious person and a gospel minister, why did you not, in justice to your people, leave them to him ?" To this Wesley answered :—

"There are several reasons why I did not. (1) No one mentioned or intimated any such thing, nor did it once enter into my thoughts. But if it had, (2), I do not know that every one who preaches the truth has wisdom and experience to guide and govern a flock. (3) I do not know whether Mr. V—— would or could give that flock all the advantages for holiness which they now enjoy and to leave them to him before I was assured of this would be neither justice nor mercy. (4) Unless they also were assured of this, they could not in conscience give up themselves to him ; and I have neither right nor power to dispose of them contrary to their conscience."

Walker urges : "But they are his already by legal establishment." Wesley rejoins :—

"If they receive the sacrament from him thrice a year, and attend his ministrations on the Lord's day, I see no more which the law requires. But to go a little deeper into this matter of **legal establishment**—'Does Mr. Conon or you think that the King and Parliament have a right to prescribe to me what Pastor I shall use?' If they prescribe one whom I know God never sent, am I obliged to receive him? And, even if I do, if I believe my former pastor is more profitable to my soul, can I leave him without sin? or has any man living a right to require this of me? Before I could, with a clear conscience, leave the Methodist Society even to such an one, all these considerations must come in.

Far from thinking that 'the withdrawing our preachers' from such a Society, without their consent, would prevent a separation from the Church, I think it would be a direct way to cause it. While we are with them our advice has weight, and keeps them to the Church.

"At our late Conference (1757) I proposed the question, 'What can be done in order to a close union with the clergy who preach the truth?' We all agreed that nothing could be more desirable. I, in particular, have long desired it" (Works, xiii., 202, 203).

Note here Wesley's clear condemnation of both Erastianism and High Churchism, and his claim that the Methodist Preachers were already (1758) the veritable **Pastors** of the Societies.

Such being Wesley's procedure, and such the principles on which he justified it, how is it that High Churchmen claim him as one of their school?

It would be well for the whole High Church party, for the Church, and for the world, if they would adopt Wesley's Church principles. Happily, we have not only his practice, but also many weighty maxims and solemn manifestoes, which prove beyond possibility of contradiction that his principles were directly opposed to those which are essential to the whole High Church theory. A few quotations from his writings will suffice to show this.—

(1) As to the Church itself. What, in his view, was requisite to the Church? In his sermon on *The Church*, Wesley says: "As 'where two or three are met together in His name, there is Christ;' so (to speak with St. Cyprian) 'where two or three believers are met together, there is a Church'" (*Sermon LXXIV.*, sec. 2).

(2) "What is the Church Universal? All the Christian congregations that are upon the face of the earth. And in this sense we understand it in our Liturgy, when we say, 'Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth' (*ibid.*, 5). "Here, then, is a clear, unexceptionable answer to that question, 'What is the Church?' The Catholic or universal Church is all the persons in the universe whom God hath so called out of the world as to entitle them to the preceding character (Eph. iv. 3—6), as to be 'one body' united by 'one Spirit,' having 'one faith, one hope, one baptism; one God and Father of all, Who is above all and through all, and in them all'" (*ibid.*, 14).

(3) "What is a National Church? That part of this great body of the universal Church which inhabits any one kingdom or nation we may properly term a National Church, as the Church of France, the Church of England," etc. (*ibid.*, 15).

(4) "What is the Church of England? It is that part, those members, of the Universal Church who are inhabitants of England. The Church of England is that body of men in England in whom 'there is one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith,' who have 'one baptism,' and 'one God and Father of all.' This and this alone is the Church of England, according to the doctrine of the Apostle" (*ibid.*, 17).

(5) What is the principle of Scriptural Catholicity? "Whoever they are that have 'one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all,' I can easily bear with their holding wrong

opinions; yea, and superstitious modes of worship. Nor would I on these accounts scruple still to include them within the pale of the Catholic Church" (*ibid.*, 19).

Wesley then shows, not, indeed, what are the marks of the true Church, but, far more to the purpose, what are the marks of the true members of the Church; finishing thus: "Lastly, the true members of the Church of Christ 'endeavour,' with all possible diligence, with all care and pains, with unwearied patience (and all will be little enough), 'to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'"

Again, "The Church is called holy, because it is holy—because every member is holy, though in different degrees. How clear is this! If the Church, as to the very essence of it, is a body of believers, no man that is not a Christian believer can be a member of it" (*ibid.*, 28).

The *Minutes of Conference* for 1745 contain the following declarations, amongst others equally opposed to High Church assumptions:—

"If any Bishop wills that I should not preach the Gospel, his will is no law to me.

"But what if he produce a law against your preaching?"

A. "I am to obey God rather than man."

In 1755 Wesley wrote to Walker of Truro:—

"We have (1) Preached abroad; (2) Prayed *extempore*; (3) Permitted Preachers who were not episcopally ordained. And were we pushed on this side, were there no alternative allowed, we should judge it our bounden duty rather wholly to separate from the Church than to give up any one of these points." "I rejoice that I am called to preach the Gospel both by God and man. Yet I acknowledge I had rather have the Divine without their human, than the human without the Divine call" (Works, xiii., 196, 200, Ed. 1872).

Again, in 1758:—

"It would be well for every Methodist Preacher, who has no scruple against it, to attend the service of the Church as often as conveniently he can" (*ibid.*, 231).

Again, in 1761:—

"They must either be thus far irregular, or destroy their own souls, and let thousands of their brethren perish for lack of knowledge. It is remarkable that Lincoln College was founded *ad propagandam Christianam fidem, et exterpandas hæreses*. But were it otherwise, suppose a parish minister to be either ignorant or negligent of his duty, and one of his flock adjures me for Christ's sake to tell him what he must do to be saved, was it ever the design of our Church that I should refuse to do so because he is not of my parish?"

In 1781, in reply to a memorial addressed to him by five Yorkshire Methodists, asking advice as to their attendance on the ministry of a Calvinistic clergyman, he says : "I cannot lay down any general rule. All I can say at present is, 'If it does not hurt you, hear them ; if it does, refrain. Be determined by your own conscience ' " (Works, xiii., 245).

Contrast with these Scripture-taught views the High Church theory, that the main and only indispensable bond of union in the Church of Christ is **external**, consisting in an unbroken line of diocesan bishops extending backwards from the last ordained priest to the Apostles themselves, through the sacramental ministrations of which priesthood alone the Saviour can savingly reach the soul, or the soul reach the Saviour.

(6) Look next at Wesley's deliverances as to the hypothesis of **Apostolical Succession**, which is admitted to be essential to the whole High Church theory.

To preclude all possibility of misrepresentation on this point, we will take the statement of the doctrine, and of its indispensability to the High Church system, in the words of one of the most redoubtable and popular champions of that system, Dr. Hook, in his *Church Dictionary*, under the words "Succession, Apostolical, Uninterrupted:" "The apostolical succession of the ministry is essential to the right administration of the holy sacraments. The Apostles ordained elders or presbyters in all churches, but the powers given to these terminated in themselves ; they could not communicate them to others. A few, therefore, were consecrated to the same rank held by the Apostles themselves, and to these the full authority of the Christian ministry was committed, qualifying them to ordain deacons and presbyters, and, when necessary, to impart their full commission to others. Here was the second link of the chain." For this statement, on which **the whole fabric of High Churchism is founded**, neither Dr. Hook nor any other is able to produce a **film** of evidence, either from the New Testament or any other historic source. It is the merest invention to meet the exigencies of a helpless, hopeless hypothesis—namely, that "it is through the ordinances and sacraments of the Church, administered by its divinely-appointed (which is made to mean **episcopally ordained**) officers, that we are brought into union and communion with the invisible Saviour."

Dean Goulburn again distinctly maintains that there is no grace guaranteed to man outside the Episcopal succession (*Holy Catholic Church*, p. 214).

Contrast with this exaltation of the outward above the inward, of a particular organization above the essential life, Wesley's axioms.

Wesley's deliverances in defence of his own Assistants and Helpers imply clearly that, in his judgment, their call to the ministry was higher than that of a great number of the episcopally ordained.

The English High Church clergy claim to derive their Apostolic Succession through the Roman Catholic Bishops. Of these Wesley declares: "I deny that the Romish Bishops came down by **uninterrupted succession** from the Apostles. I never could see it proved, and I am persuaded I never shall. But **unless this is proved**, your own Pastors, **on your principles**, are no Pastors at all" (Works, iii., 44, 45). The true, Scriptural, common-sense doctrine of Apostolical Succession Wesley states with clearness and force: "Must not every man, whether clergyman or layman, be, in some respects, like the Apostles, or go to hell? Can any man be saved if he be not holy, like the Apostles, a follower of them as they were of Christ? And ought not every Preacher of the Gospel to be in a peculiar manner like the Apostles, both **in holy tempers**, in **exemplariness of life**, and in his indefatigable labours for the good of souls? Woe unto every ambassador of Christ who is not like the Apostles in this! in holiness, in making full proof of his ministry, in spending and being spent for Christ!" (Works, viii., 220).

When Bishop (afterwards Archbishop) Secker complained against the Methodists that "they maintain it lawful for men to preach who are not Episcopally ordained, and thereby contradict the 'Twenty-Third Article,'" Wesley replied:—

"In some circumstances they do, particularly where thousands are rushing into destruction; and those who are ordained, and appointed to watch over them, neither care for nor know how to help them. 'But hereby they contradict the Twenty-Third Article to which they have subscribed.' They subscribed it in the simplicity of their hearts, when they firmly believed none but Episcopal ordination valid. But **Bishop Stillingfleet has since fully convinced them that this was an entire mistake.** They think **Episcopal authority cannot reverse what is fixed by Divine authority.**"

Secker further urges:—

"These are oppositions to the most fundamental principles and essentially constituent parts of our Establishment," etc.

Wesley rejoins:—

"'The most fundamental principles!' No more than the tiles are the most fundamental principles of a house. Useful doubtless they are, yet you must take them off, if you would repair the rotten timber beneath. 'Essentially constituent parts of our Establishment!' Well, we will not quarrel for a word.

Perhaps the doors may be essentially constituent parts of the building we call a church. Yet, if it were on fire, we might innocently break them open, or even throw them, for a time, off the hinges. **Now this is really the case.** The timber is rotten, yea, the main beams of the house; and they want to place that firm beam, salvation by faith, in room of that rotten beam, salvation by works. A fire is kindled in the Church, the house of the living God; the fire of love of the world, ambition, covetousness, envy, anger, malice, bitter zeal—in one word, of ungodliness and unrighteousness. O! who will come and help to quench it? Under disadvantages and discouragements of every kind, a little handful of men have made a beginning, and I trust they will not leave off till the building is saved, or they sink in the ruins of it" (Works, xiii., 235—7).

As to Episcopacy, Wesley thus delivers his opinion:—

"I still believe the episcopal form of Church-government to be scriptural and apostolical. I mean, well-agreeing with the practice and writing of the Apostles. But that it is **prescribed** in Scripture I do not believe. This opinion which I once zealously espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicon*. I think he has unanswerably proved that 'neither Christ nor His Apostles **prescribe** any particular form of Church-government, and that the plea of **Divine right** for diocesan episcopacy was never heard of in the primitive Church.'

"But were it otherwise, I should still call these smaller points than the loving God and all mankind. . . This is certainly a principle held by those in derision termed Methodists. I would take some pains to recover any one from error, or to reconcile him to our Church, I mean to the Church of England. But I would take much more pains to recover any one from sin. One who lives and dies in error or in dissent from our Church may yet be saved; but one who lives and dies in sin must perish. I would to God we could all agree both in opinions and in outward worship. But if this cannot be, may we not agree in holiness?" (Published by Wesley in *The Arminian Magazine* for November 1779).

Wesley's views on Ordination and Diocesan Episcopacy are still further stated in the same serial in reply to another clergyman:—

"When Paul and Barnabas were **separated for the work to which they were called**, this was not ordaining them. St. Paul was ordained long before, and that **not of man, nor by man**. It was only **inducting** him to the province for which our Lord had appointed him from the beginning. For this end the **prophets and teachers** fasted, prayed, and laid their hands upon them—a rite which was used, not in ordination only, but in blessing, and on many other occasions.

"Concerning **Diocesan Episcopacy**, there are several questions I should be glad to have answered: (1) Where is it **prescribed** in Scripture? (2) How does it appear that the Apostles 'settled it in all the Churches they planted'? (3) How does it appear that they **so settled it in any as to make it of perpetual obligation**? It is allowed 'Christ and His Apostles did put the Churches under some form of government or other.' But (1) Did they put **all Churches** under

the same **precise** form? If they did, (2) Can we prove this to have been the very same which now remains in the Church of England?"

Note, further, Wesley's declared view as to **Schism**. In the letter last quoted, Wesley says:—

"How **many** define Schism I am not concerned to know. But I **keep to my Bible**, as our Church in her Sixth Article teaches me to do. The first time I read the term (**Schism**) there is 1 Cor. i. I meet with it again in chap. xi. 18. But it is plain, by Schism, in both places, is meant, not any **separation from** the Church, but uncharitable **divisions in** it. For the Corinthians continued to be one Church; and, notwithstanding all their strife and contention, there was no separation of any one party from the rest, **with regard to external communion**. It is in the same sense the word is used in chap. xii. 25. And these are the only places in the New Testament where it occurs. Therefore, the indulging any unkind temper towards our fellow-Christians is the true Scriptural **Schism**."

It is clear from this that the Church of England, in Wesley's time, was, and in our own day—with its mutually repellent High Church Low Church, and Broad Church—is, in a state of **Schism**, at once chronic and acute.

The specimen of Wesley's plain-speaking with which the last-quoted letter closes (the name of the correspondent is not mentioned) is too characteristic to be omitted:—

"Permit me, sir, to speak exceeding plainly. Are you not an **orthodox** man? Perhaps there is none more so in the diocese. And yet possibly you may have no religion at all. If it be true that you frequently drink to excess, you may have **orthodoxy**, but you can have no **religion**. If, when you are in a passion, you call your brother, 'Thou fool,' you have no religion at all. If you ever curse, and take the name of God in vain, you can have no **other religion than orthodoxy**—a religion of which the devil and his angels may have full as much as you. O, sir, what an idle thing it is for you to dispute about lay-preachers! Is not a lay-preacher preferable to a drunken preacher? To a cursing, swearing preacher? . . . In tender compassion I speak this."

Note next Wesley's views and feelings with regard to **Nonconformists**. (We have seen that he claims for godly Nonconformists a right to be regarded as members of the Church of England.)

"August 24th (1744), **St. Bartholomew's Day**, I preached for the last time before the University of Oxford. I am now clear of the blood of these men. I have fully delivered my own soul. And I am well pleased that it should be the very day on which, in the last century, near two thousand burning and shining lights were put out at one stroke" (Works, xiii., 315, and Journal, August 24th, 1744).

It is necessary to note the character of Wesley's home-training with regard to Dissent. His father, who had been trained in a Dissenters'

College, although he advocated "the uniting of Conformists and Nonconformists," yet wrote against the toleration of Dissenting academies, on this ground among others, that "several of the nobility, and many gentry," sent their sons to such seminaries rather than "the universities."

Wesley's replies to the High Church objections of his brother Charles are well known, such as: "I do not at all think (to tell you a secret) that the work will ever be destroyed, Church or no Church" (Works, xii., 121), as also his famous saying: "The *succession I know to be a fable,*" etc.

Again, the reasons assigned by Wesley for not definitely and definitively separating from the Established Church are, none of them, High Church reasons. These are explicitly and categorically stated by him in his **Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England**, written in the year 1758. They are in substance:—

"(1) That 'it would be a contradiction to the solemn and repeated declarations which we have made in all manner of ways.'"

These declarations were made, not as binding pledges, but as honest and open-hearted avowals of purpose and aim.

Indeed, as we have seen, the only **plan** or programme with which Wesley started was to revive and leaven the Church without separating from it. A formal secession, like that of the Methodist New Connexion from its parent body, a deliberate **disruption**, like that which split the "auld Kirk" of Scotland in two, would have been a **harking back** from the avowal with which the Wesleys started. The setting up of a new religious denomination was not only remote from their design or desire, it was deprecated with all their hearts. If anything could have deterred them from their grand evangelistic enterprise, it would have been, not the fear of deadly persecution, but of divisive partizanship. Their object was simply that of Jehoshaphat, when he "went out through the people from Beersheba to Mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the Lord God of their fathers" (2 Chron. xix. 4). What the Church needed was, not dividing, but uniting and reviving; what the country needed was, not a new sect, but a new spirit.

Wesley's second reason is purely practical and prudential:—

"(2) Separation would not help but hinder the great work they had at heart and in hand. It would give high occasion of offence to those who seek and desire occasion; and (3) it would exceedingly prejudice against us many who fear, yea, who love God.

"(4) Because it would hinder multitudes of those who neither love nor fear God from hearing us at all."

Thousands who cared little or nothing for Christ were all aflame with zeal for the Church, and were ready, not only to light bonfires, and get up fresh Sacheverell riots, but, for that matter, to set up **stakes** and pile up faggots, and burn schismatics for "the Church as by law established."

"(5) Because it would occasion many hundreds, if not some thousands, of those who are now united with us, to separate from us, etc.; yea, and some of those who have a deep work of grace in their souls."

A large proportion of the best of the Methodist people would have left the Wesleys, had they left the Church.

"(6, 7) Because it would be throwing balls of wild fire among those who are now quiet in the land. We are now sweetly united together in love. But this would occasion inconceivable strife and contention between those who left and those who remained in the Church, etc. It would engage me, for one, in a thousand controversies, both in public and private, and so take me off from those more useful labours which might otherwise employ the short remainder of my life.

"(8) **Because to form the plan of a new Church would require infinite time and care** (which might otherwise be far more profitably bestowed), **with much more wisdom and greater depth and extensiveness of thought than any of us are masters of.**"

A most significant reason this; showing that the very unpremeditatedness of the work was devoutly and sagaciously premeditated.

"(9) Because, from some having barely entertained a distant thought of this, evil fruits have already followed, such as prejudice against the clergy in general, and aptness to believe ill of them; contempt, not without a degree of bitterness, of clergymen, as such; and sharpness of language toward the whole order, etc.

"(10) Because the experiment has been frequently tried already, and has never answered the expectation. If these had lived and died, like John Arndt, Robert Bolton, and many others, in the Churches to which they belonged, notwithstanding the wickedness which overflowed both the teachers and the people therein, they would have spread the leaven of true religion far and wide, etc.

"(11) Because we have melancholy instances of this even now before our eyes. Many have, in our memory, left the Church and formed themselves into distinct bodies; and certainly some of them from a real persuasion that they should do God more service. Have they been either more holy or more useful than they were before?"

"(12) Because by such a separation we should not only throw away the peculiar glorying which God has given us, that we do and will suffer all things for our brethren's sake, though the more we love them the less we be loved, but should act in direct contradiction to that very end for which we believe God

hath raised us up. The first message of all our Preachers is to the lost sheep of the Church of England.

“ We look upon ourselves, not as authors or ringleaders of a particular sect or party (it is the furthest thing from our thoughts), but as messengers of God to those who are Christians in name, but heathens in heart and in life, to call them back to that from which they are fallen, to real, genuine Christianity. We are, therefore, debtors to all these, of whatever opinion or denomination.

“ We look upon the Methodists, so called, in general, not as any particular party. This would exceedingly obstruct the grand design for which we conceive God has raised them up.

“ We feel in ourselves a strong *στοργή*, a kind of natural affection for our country ” (Works, xiii. 225—228).

It was just and right that Wesley should leave the *onus separandi*, and the odium of estrangement from the Established Church, on those whose fault it was. It was the negligence of the Church itself, and its departure from, and intolerance of, its own doctrines and principles, which called forth the great Methodist movement. The Wesleys did not forsake the pulpits of the Church till its pulpits were closed against them. That the Church could not and did not absorb Methodism into itself was to the Church's own blame and bane. Absorption without assimilation is disease, and the Church neither could nor would assimilate itself to the Methodists ; and for Methodism to be assimilated to the Church as it then was would have been the undoing of Methodism.

It is plain, then, that Wesley's declared, as well as his working, Church principles were directly opposed to the High Church hypothesis. This practically makes the Church rather an end than a means ; inasmuch as it would sacrifice the great object for which the Church was instituted, and for which it exists—the salvation of souls from sin—to the supposed authority of the clergy ; and had rather let people believe that they can be saved in their sins by sacraments, than see them actually saved from their sins by what it calls irregularity.

So logically concatenated were the successive links in Wesley's system as an attempt to revive religion in the United Kingdom, that the justification or condemnation of them all is involved in the justification or condemnation of the first—the preaching out of doors—even as that was necessitated by the enterprise itself ; since without it the Three Kingdoms could never have been evangelized.

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CHAPTER VIII.

“THE ARMINIAN METHODIST MAGAZINE,” AND WESLEY’S  
LITERARY LABOURS.

What other step did Wesley take which tended to give distinctiveness to “the Connexion” of Churches under his care ?

The starting, in the year 1778, a literary Connexional organ, called *The Arminian Magazine*. Methodism had long felt the need of a periodical of its own. In his Prospectus or “Proposals” Wesley fully explains the motive of the Magazine. He says that “for nearly forty years”—that is, from the first formation of the United Societies—he had been “desired” to publish such a monthly. His object was “not to get money,” even for carrying on his grand evangelistic campaigns. The Magazine was the outbirth of Wesley’s big and busy brain. It was, in the first place, **defensive** and antidotic; its design being to counteract the poison of other periodicals: “to oppose magazine to magazine;” to fight assailants “with their own weapons.” It was also **preventive**, “to guard those who are not poisoned already.” It was **aggressive**, but its polemics were pacificatory. Though controversial, it was chivalrous. It was thus **defensively polemic**; but its polemics were as dignified as they were daring and determined. He says: “This is the only way to preserve the Methodists, and to keep the Calvinists quiet. I know, by long experience, they will never bend but when the war is carried into their own quarters. This I will do as long as God spares my life, and in love and ‘meekness of wisdom.’ This is the way, the only way, to establish lasting peace.”

Conjoined with this defensive and declaratory doctrinal aim, and scarcely secondary to it, was that of direct edification. The Magazine was a cathedral in the style of a citadel: *templum in modo arcis*. Its towers were pierced with arrow-slits. Its nave and aisles were richly monumental, both with scroll and effigy. Its Lives and Letters were amongst its most striking features. They contained “the marrow of experimental and practical religion,” and formed a large element in the originality and speciality of the project. Nothing of the kind had appeared before. It was, as Wesley said, “a new thing in the land.”

He was very sensitive as to the credit of the Magazine, and met objections with promptitude, frankness, and respect. In answer to

the demand for a larger number of "**practical treatises**," to the exclusion of controversy, he insists on the inexorable necessity of "**contending earnestly** for the faith once delivered unto the saints."

It is highly characteristic of Wesley that he variegate the Magazine, and relieves the sternness of its polemics, and the terse solemnity of its "**Experiences**," by a considerable proportion of refined and elegant though "not strictly religious poetry;" vindicating its insertion on the ground of its exquisite sentiment and diction, and the fact that "there is nothing in it contrary to religion, nothing that can offend the chastest ears, and that many truly religious men and women have profited thereby." He evidently held that, since elegant entertainment is of the very essence of a Magazine, nothing is out of place, even in a Methodist Magazine, which can please without polluting or perverting. As to literary aliment, he seems to have adopted the old dietetic maxim: **Whatever does not poison fattens.** And so, side by side with "**The Life of an Early Methodist Preacher**," and one of his own "**Letters on Christian Perfection**," we see Prior's poem "**Henry and Emma**." The entertaining element formed a large but not a very costly importation; the newest and most interesting book of travels being laid under heavy contribution. The first number of the Magazine announced the resolve to publish "neither politics nor general news." "Religious intelligence" was always welcome. Never did magazine set forth on its career under more eminent editorship. John and Charles Wesley were joint editors, and the poetic and polemic Thomas Olivers was sub-editor. Wesley assumed that the Connexional Magazine would have a Connexional circulation. It was made one of the foremost duties of an "Assistant"—Superintendent of a Circuit—to promote its popularity. But he contemplated for it a yet wider range. The title-page announced that it was "sold by the booksellers in town and country." Wesley's Journal proves that he took great pains to secure the efficiency and interest of the Connexional Organ. He resolutely made leisure, amidst his multitudinous engrossments, to produce and collect and prepare materials for it.

The Magazine has never changed its principles, although it has twice changed its name—more than twice changed its price; again and again varied its size and shape, and very often changed its editors, for the most part "by reason of death." And now, in its hundred and eleventh year, the silvery hoar of antiquity is to it "a crown of glory," being "found in the way of righteousness."

After Wesley's death the Conference took up the Magazine with spirit. The Preface to the Magazine for 1792 states that "it will be

conducted on the same plan as Mr. Wesley left it :” its object still being the exposition and defence of Scriptural truth, and “ the profit and **entertainment** of our readers.” They aimed at a much more than ephemeral interest : “ to render the whole not only pleasing and edifying to the present purchasers, but also useful to posterity ” In this, too, they succeeded.

The literary department of “ the work of God ” was thought of sufficient importance to justify the setting apart to it of one of his Preachers, George Whitfield ; and the next year the department was reinforced by the appointment of a sub-editor, another itinerant, George Story. The Conference of 1804 **detailed** four of its Ministers to the superintendence of the comparatively scanty literature of the comparatively small Connexion : (1) Joseph Benson, the most powerful and popular preacher of the day, and next, perhaps, to Dr. Coke, the foremost man in Methodism ; (2) George Story ; (3) Robert Lomas, as Book Steward ; (4) George Whitfield. On the death of Benson, in 1821, Jabez Bunting, the foremost man in the Connexion, was appointed his successor in the editorship.

The Magazine was recognised as the “ official organ ” of the Wesleyan Methodist body, and the champion of its principles and institutions. It was still “ set for the defence and confirmation of the Gospel.”

Meanwhile, “ all things were of God.” Not only was “ the **Truth of God** defended,” and “ the **Word of God** illustrated ” ; but “ the **Grace of God** manifested ” in Christian biography, and “ the **Works of God** displayed ” in devout and popular scientific Papers. *The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* is, beyond question and compare, the richest repertory of contemporary Christian biography in the whole literature of the Christian Church. The presentation of personal proofs of the unabated power of the Gospel to transform the nature, transfigure the character, and ennoble and beautify the life, is far more availing for the spread of Scriptural holiness than the most powerful polemics. The Memoirs and Obituaries, which for a hundred and ten years have lent to the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* the quickening odour of Scriptural sanctity, are not mortuary tablets on the walls of dimly-lighted catacombs, but speaking family portraits, enlivening the long corridors of the palace-home of Faith.

The Magazine was regarded by Wesley and his strong-minded successors as one of the indispensable institutions of Methodism, and as an essential element in its economy. Indeed, the importance and necessity of such an organ to such a Connexion of Churches is too obvious to need insisting on. In later years the periodical

literature of the Connexion has steadily grown ; but it can hardly compete with profusely-illustrated periodicals in which the long-drawn love-story is the main attraction, and to which a loose and loosening theology of specious sentiment finds free admission—unless it be practically regarded, by ministers especially, as it was in the old times, as an indispensable department of the work of God. Such directions as the following were often given in the Minutes: “Be more active in dispersing the books” (Works, viii., 328).

As we have already shown. Wesley began to print almost as soon as he began to preach. So early as 1733, whilst still a tutor in Oxford, he published a *Collection of Forms of Prayer for every Day in the Week*. It bears the characteristic and prophetic motto, “Who hath despised the day of small things ;” being intended for his pupils and the poor. The next year he began his long series of most judicious abridgments of valuable works, whose size and price were practically prohibitive to the general reader, by publishing an abridgment of Norriss’ exquisite *Treatise on Christian Prudence*. In 1737, amidst the disheartening failures of his Mission to Georgia, he showed the buoyant hopefulness of his devotion by publishing in America *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns*. From 1739 to 1791, the year of his death, a stretch of more than half a century, year by year, without a single break, his prolific pen enriched the religious, educational, and popularly scientific literature of our language. The Catalogue of his original works, compilations, and abridgments includes more than two hundred volumes. As the great educational reformer and pioneer of his century, he prepared and published several short, sensible, and merciful school-books. Wesley’s four-and-twenty years’ experience as scholar and teacher had fitted him for this task, both as to sympathy and skill. For a full century after the foundation of Kingswood School, the great aim of the preparers of school grammars would seem to have been to render the avowedly and proverbially bitter root of the tree of learning, so bitter as to prepossess the average learner with an unconquerable distaste for the fruit. Wesley, on the contrary, tried to make grammar, like the Gospel, so plain that he might run who read it. He translated, compressed, simplified, and popularized the Oxford text-book on Logic (Aldrich’s), under the title *A Compendium of Logic*. He also published *A Short Roman History*, and a most charitable *History of England*, in three volumes, “from the earliest times to the death of George II.” This was for a time very popular, and had a large sale. Dr. Wilson of Edinburgh, in the Lectures on the **Evangelical Succession**, justly says that Wesley

was the forerunner of Robert and William Chambers and Charles Knight.

Wesley was also a laborious writer and disseminator of tracts. The so-called **Tractarians** or **Tractmen** of a century later were much rather pamphleteers. Besides, they wrote for the clergy and for scholars; Wesley for the common people. Since the first great Oxonian Reformer, John Wycliffe, there had been no such producer and distributor of religious tracts as John Wesley. His zeal in this respect also "provoked very many." So early as 1745 he writes: "We had within a short time given away some thousands of little tracts among the common people, and it pleased God thereby to provoke others to jealousy; insomuch that the Lord Mayor had ordered a large quantity of papers dissuading from cursing and swearing to be printed and distributed among the train-bands." This was five years earlier than the origination of the **Book Society for promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor**. The next great labourer in this field was Charles Wesley's friend, Hannah More, whose Cheap Repository tracts had, before the close of the last century, been disseminated by hundreds of thousands. The Religious Tract Society was not founded till eight years after Wesley's death. He was also one of the very first to render the wonders of Physical Science accessible to the people. He was one of the first to call attention to the importance of the discoveries of Priestley and Franklin. In 1758 he began to write his *Compendium of Natural Philosophy*, published in 1763, in two volumes, enlarged to three volumes in 1770, and to five in 1784. His *Concise Ecclesiastical History*, in four volumes, supplemented by *A Short History of the People called Methodists*, is unprecedented in its impartiality, its true catholicity and spiritual insight, and its sagacious eliciting of the true significance of ecclesiastical events. His *Primitive Physic* reads quaintly enough now that **medicine** has at last become a science, but it was a marvellous advance upon the popular hygienic literature of the time: Culpepper's *Herbal*, and *A Thousand Notable Things*; which held their ground far into the present century. It was a truly philanthropic publication.

In 1753 he composed "*The Complete English Dictionary, explaining most of those Hard Words which are found in the best English Writers. By a Lover of Good English and Common Sense.*" This handy, useful duodecimo, with its playfully satiric preface, is highly characteristic. It anticipates the poet's protest:—

"Not to deface the language of the nation,  
With long-tailed words in **osity** and **ation**."

It embodies the pure, strong vocabulary of the best Methodist Preachers down to the times of Robert Newton, Jabez Bunting, Isaac Keeling, William M. Bunting, and John Lomas. It leaves out all words of which everybody knows the meaning. For Wesley, both as author and abridger, disdained an exhausting exhaustiveness, and a superfluous and slavish affectation of completeness. He also left out of the dictionary all words that ought never to have been admitted into the language. All Wesley's publications were like his person : short, compact, neat, well put together, bright and vigorous, with no burdensome redundance. His power of compression was gigantic. He put his sentences, so to speak, under an hydraulic press. He packed thought and information, and stored mental and spiritual aliment, like pemmican tinned for an Arctic expedition. In everything his mottoes seemed to be : "Freely ye have received, **freely give** ;" "To do good and to communicate—**make common**—forget not." He would have all men to be sharers in physical well-being, sound and useful knowledge, good taste, refined literary enjoyment, and above all Scriptural saintliness, and "all joy and peace through believing."

These literary labours he accomplished by the eager snatching up of fragments of time and literal windfalls of leisure. Detained for three days, by contrary winds, in his eighty-fourth year, in a crowded Dutch inn at Helveltsluys, he serenely "took the opportunity of writing a sermon for the Magazine" (Journal, August 1786). Stopped by the inflowing tide in endeavouring to strike across a bay on his way to Holyhead, he quietly betakes himself to the nearest Welsh cottage, and spends the hours, whilst waiting for the reflux, in translating Aldrich's Logic, for the benefit of his Kingswood scholars, his young Preachers, and the unlearned public. Ordered by the doctors to the Hotwells at Bristol, "so ill as to be unable to travel and preach," he produces the *Notes on the New Testament*, which take so important a place in Wesleyan theology.

Wesley was also the founder of the **Methodist Book Room**, and appointer of the first Methodist Book Committee, for superintending its affairs (Journal, iv., 439). See Dr. Osborn's *Outlines of Methodist Bibliography*.

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## CHAPTER IX.

WERE THE WESLEYS JUSTIFIED IN CLINGING TO THE  
ESTABLISHED CHURCH?

**Were the Wesleys justified in stopping in a Church which was in such a condition as that of the Established Church of their day?**

It was their clear duty to stay in it so long as they were convinced that they were thus in a better position to revive its decaying life and to supply its deficiencies.

It is perfectly clear from the whole tone and tenor of Wesley's writing and action, and from explicit deliverances in his Journals and his Church History, that his attachment to the Established Church did not grow out of the assumption that it is the whole or the only true Church in the land, by virtue of its bishops being in the hypothetic Apostolical Succession. It is equally certain that he clung to the National Church, the Church of his parentage and education, not **because** but **although** it was the Established Church. He points out earnestly the evils which arose from the amalgamation by Constantine of the Church with the State, and from the Church allowing the State to intermeddle with its spiritual affairs. But Wesley's quarrel was not with history. His call was not to a censorship of the errors of the past, but to a grappling with the miseries and the perils of the present. The connection between Church and State in England had been the inevitable result of the adoption of Christianity by heathen kings, and through their authority or influence by the people generally. Wesley felt no Divine commission to rectify that. His reply, when asked why he did not attack in detail political abuses, applies equally to his not concerning himself directly with ecclesiastical mistakes.

Moreover, as we have seen, Wesley was held to the Established Church by a healthy sentiment—"a natural affection"—which shrank from assuming towards his mother-Church an attitude which might seem to imply a denial of its right to be still regarded as a veritable Church of Christ. This is plain from the answer given at the Irish Conference to the question: "Is it not our duty to separate from the Church, considering the wickedness both of the clergy and the people?" A. "We conceive not," etc. (Myles' *History of the Methodists*, chap. iv., and *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, January, 1887, p. 61.) He had been brought up in a dislike of Dissent by parents who had themselves

been Dissenters in youth, and he had been kept in such ignorance of its history as not to have met with the striking conversation between his own grandfather and the Bishop of Bristol, which is given by Calamy. The Dissenters on their part looked down upon Methodism, and with very few exceptions kept clear of it, for fear of compromising their respectability. This is the very ground taken by Watts in his remonstrance with Doddridge for having admitted Whitefield to his pulpit.

Besides the examples of Arndt and Bolton, which Wesley adduces, he might have named more recent instances in Scotland in his own time. When the dominant and domineering Moderatism of the Kirk drove the Erskines into secession, quite as earnest evangelic preachers and writers, such as Boston, McLaurin, and Willison, stayed within. The Reformation itself, indeed, was at first a revival **within** the Church itself. The Evangelic Mission to Abyssinia, under Gobet and Krapf, scrupulously avoided everything which might be regarded as an attempt to form a new Church, rather than to revive and reinforce the old one: in this the Abyssinian missionaries avowedly followed the example of the Moravian **Diaspora** Missionaries, who, in turn, followed the example of Wesley in England, forming **Societies**, whose object is "the evangelization of the national Churches on the continent of Europe, without depriving them of their members." These missionaries are all itinerant evangelists, who preach, organize, and oversee "Societies," but leave the sacraments to the clergy.\*

The relation of the noble Vinet and his co-revivalists to the Established Church of his native canton was far more strained than that of Wesley to the Church of his parentage and baptism. Vinet was in theory an avowed **voluntary**. Yet he clung to his national Church with the most tenacious loyalty; that Church being in at least as bad a state as the English Church in Wesley's time. He writes of "the Church which Beza had founded, and the State had enslaved and degraded: I love in her rather **what she may become**, than what she has been. I love in her one of the provinces of the territory of the invisible Church. I love in her that which our fathers have loved in her, a hospice for travellers on the way to eternity, a thread of attachment cast by the hand of the Lord upon my native country. I love in her something more ancient than all our past; I would say,

\* Their range extends through Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Livonia, Esthonia, and other parts of Russia, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. They had in 1883 sixty-two Itinerant Preachers, and about eighty thousand "Society Members" (Bishop de Schwermetz in *Herzog*)

I love what she still has in her of the Church of Christ, or rather it is the Church of Christ that I love in her." And yet he admits that it was "a mere clerical machine controlled by the Government." During the briefly permitted Wesleyan Methodist labours in the Canton de Vaud a peasant said to a Swiss clergyman: "No fear of my becoming a Methodist, unless, indeed, I were ordered to do so by the Government!" Yet Vinet still maintained, "We have a Vaudois Church to save." He and the other Evangelicals were called **Methodists**, and suffered severe persecution both by the State and the populace.

The American missionaries to the Nestorians began with the avowed and honest purpose, not of setting up a new Church, but of reviving, and by reviving reforming, the ancient Church of the land. But such was the condition of things there, as in England when Wesley opened his commission, that every step taken to accomplish this benign and necessary enterprise was perforce an **innovation**. It was found to be as impossible to evangelize the Nestorian Church without practically forming a much more Apostolic Church beside it, as to evangelize the English Church in the eighteenth century without the like result. In Armenia the Evangelicals were gradually driven from the Churches, as in England the Methodists; and both in like manner, by being denounced and dealt with as separatists, were compelled to become such.

The like idea prevails in what the Archbishop of Canterbury terms "**Missions of Maintenance**," as distinguished from attempts "to incorporate or obliterate ancient Churches." "This Church of ours has long owned her vocation, though she has been feeble and intermittent in her efforts, to **maintain the energies** of the more **failing Churches** in the East, and effectively to **aid their own yearnings** after more light and restored discipline" (*Anglican Pulpit of To-day*, p. 8).

What we now see to be the inevitable result of Wesley's action was by no means so clear to him. It was far better that Wesley and the Methodists should lovingly labour at reviving the decayed life of the Church, supplying its glaring defects and remedying its acknowledged evils, than rush into an avowed and angry rupture with it. He says "Had we been Dissenters of any kind, or even Low Churchmen, so called, it would have been a great stumbling-block in the way of those who are zealous for the Church. And yet had we continued in the impetuosity of our High Church zeal, neither should we have been willing to converse with Dissenters, nor they to receive any good at our hands. Some objections were kept out of the way by our known contempt of money and preferment" (*Works*, viii., 227).

But we have seen that Wesley's unwillingness to break with and break from the Established Church had **nothing** at all in common with "High Church" principles, and that his clinging to the Church of his childhood, and his training, and of his country's annals, was a filial feeling, and a historical sentiment, most creditable to his heart and head.

And this is the really respectable element in the High Church tendency, which makes one look with tenderness and even reverence on its most grotesque manifestations, as an effort to **maintain some traceable connection and relationship with the Church of the past**. In Central Africa, only four degrees north of the Equator, stands the little Christian kingdom of Susa, islanded amongst heathen tribes. The only touch they have of Christendom is a yearly caravan to Abyssinia. Finding themselves without a bishop, they once sent to the nearest bishop, Cyril of Gondar, "an envoy, bearing a dried skin, with the request that Cyril would fill that skin with his breath, so that they might blow with it upon their candidates for the priesthood, and thus ordain them" (Thiersch's *Abyssinia*, translated by Pereira, p. 65).

One may smile, but with moistened eyes, at this childlike endeavour of a simple, semi-savage Church to keep touch of the Past, and to claim contact with Christendom. But when educated men, in contempt of history and their own scholarship, get up a hypothesis which they decree into a dogma, in order to countenance their pretension to be the sole consignees of Divine grace for the whole human family, and to hold in their hands the spiritual condition and the eternal destinies of their fellow-men, then our smile must be not that of tender sympathy, but that of indignant derision.

But, we repeat, the affection and reverence of the Wesleys for the Church of which they were ordained Ministers was a beautiful and manly sentiment, akin to that loving deference to their father and mother which induced them to consult both at every important step in their career.

It was, surely, a noble sentiment which would rather leaven the Church than leave it—that is to say, than abandon it to the half-heathen condition into which it had sunk, by withdrawing from it so much of the life-blood of vital godliness. Isaac Taylor puts the case well: "We recognise, upon the front of **Methodism**, that special characteristic which has attached to **Heaven's own servants**, from age to age, as the authentic representatives, first, of an **existing and visible order of things**, and then of that always

extant remonstrant energy which took its rise in some anterior seasons of renovation. Let us be shown anywhere a company of men whose office it has been to reanimate what has become lifeless, and to purify what is corrupt, who have not stood **related, in this twofold manner, to the present and to the past**" (*Wesley and Methodism*, p. 139).

Wesley was too great a man to hastily cut himself off from a Church which was not only the Church of his nurture, but, with all its faults, was identified with the national life and the historic greatness of his country; a Church, the ideal of which, at least, was so fine, so many of whose worthies had been saints and witnesses for Christ; a Church which had studded the land with fair and venerable sanctuaries, and had maintained from generation to generation seemly Christian services in the parishes into which the whole land was divided.

So late as September, 1788, Wesley put the matter very clearly: "The question **properly refers**, when we speak of a separation from the Church, to a **total and immediate** separation. Such was that of Mr. Ingham's people first, and afterwards that of Lady Huntingdon's, who all agreed to **form themselves into a separate body without delay, to go to church no more**, and to have no more connexion with the Church of England than with the Church of Rome. A kind of separation has already taken place, and **will inevitably spread, though by slow degrees**" (*Works*, xiii., 263, 264). Wesley's prophecy has been realized with wonderful exactness.

That Wesley was very anxious to retard this inevitable separation as much as possible is perfectly clear. He deprecated the "inevitable": the Methodists becoming "a distinct body" And the inevitableness of gradual separation, he saw, was mainly the fault of the clergy. "Their enemies provoke them" (the Methodists) "to it, **the clergy in particular, most of whom**, far from thanking them for continuing in the Church, use all the means in their power, fair and unfair, to drive them out of it." This was written in 1788 (*ibid.*, 266.) One of these unfair means, which Wesley complains of, was an anticipation of the social crime now called **boycotting**—refusing to have any dealings with a Methodist.

In 1789, Wesley replied to the charge that what he had done would "make way for a total separation from the Church," "Leave to God what may come after" (*ibid.*, 267).

As to the reabsorption of his Societies by handing them over to the tender mercies of the parish clergy, Wesley never faltered for a

moment. When the clergy, who had let their sheep wander at will, reclaimed them after he had sought them out and folded them ; and denounced him, their true shepherd, as a ravening beast of prey, the leonine nature of the meek hero was at once aroused. Wesley at bay reminds one of the fine Homeric picture in Isaiah : " Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them " (Isa. xxxi. 4) What a defiant roar there is in his reply to the Bishop of London's Charge ! (See Works, viii., 481).

" Your Lordship has, without doubt, had some success in opposing this doctrine. Very many have, by your Lordship's unwearied endeavours, been deterred from hearing at all ; and have thereby probably escaped the being *seduced into holiness*, and have died in their sins. My Lord, the time is short. I am past the noon of life, and my remaining years fall away as a shadow. Your Lordship is old and full of days, many past the usual age of man. It cannot, therefore, be long before we shall both drop this house of earth, and stand naked before God. No, nor before we shall see the great white throne coming down from heaven, and Him that sitteth thereon. On His left hand shall be those who are shortly to dwell in everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. In that number will be all who died in their sins, and among the left, those whom you *preserved from repentance*. Will you then rejoice in your success ? The Lord God grant it may not be said in that hour, ' These were preserved in their iniquity, but their blood I require at thy hands ! '

" I am your Lordship's dutiful son and servant,

" JOHN WESLEY.

" London, June 11th, 1747."

Again, " God begins a glorious work in our land. You set yourself against it with all your might, to prevent its beginning where it doth not yet appear and to destroy it wherever it does. In part you prevail. You keep many from hearing the word that is able to save their souls. Others who have heard it you induce to turn back from God, and to list under the devil's banner again. Then you make the success of your own wickedness an excuse for not acknowledging the work of God. You urge that ' not many sinners were reformed ! and that some of those are now as bad as ever. ' Whose fault is this ? Is it ours or your own ? " (*Appeal*, Works, ix., 53).

All finely balanced natures feel Wesley's difficulty in the like circumstances. Thus Dr. Wenger, after deploring the spiritual condition of the Swiss National Church, writes : " I do not intend on these grounds to separate myself from the Church. . . . It seems to me, the Church ought **from within** to reform itself. . . .

Again and again its sad, desolate condition rises before me, having for the majority of its members unconverted and unbelieving men, without manifesting any desire to come out of this heathenish state. Along with this I personally have the impression that a speedy change, a kind of reformation, in which I might have something to do, awaits her" (Underhill's *Life of Wenger*, p. 49).

But the great justification of the Methodists for maintaining for so long a time connection with the Established Church is the example of the Apostles and the Church at Jerusalem. The relation of early Methodism to the Established Church so closely resembles that of the first Christian Society in Jerusalem to the Jewish Church, that a description of the one is a description of the other. Take the following account of the Christian Church in Jerusalem in Lechler's *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times*, and in it will be seen at once that, with the alteration of a few letters—the substitution of **English** for "**Jewish**," and of **Established** for "**Theocratic**"—it is equally true of the relation of the early Methodist Societies to the Church of England:—

"We must abide by the fact that the Churches of believers amongst the Jews" (English) "had not as **Societies** a **fully independent** existence, but rather rested upon the Jewish theocratic" (English established) association (cf. Rothe). Believers lived in the bosom of the latter, and were originally, as a **Society**, nothing but a **limited company of like-minded Israelites**" (English Church-people).

"Notwithstanding the fact that they were closely united among themselves, they still remained as before—members of the civil and religious community. Their mutual connection with the organs, forms, offices, and regulations arising gradually, by inner development, according to the measure of need, we recognize as the germ of the future Church" (pp. 108, 109).

We may quote here another striking point of correspondence between Methodism and the Primitive Church: "Even those who in recent times have insisted most strongly upon **office and privilege** admit that teaching, in the meetings of the first Churches, was in no wise a thing attached exclusively to office—that is, the office of presbyter—but that even plain members of the Church both had and exercised the gift of teaching. We must not, however, imagine an unlimited liberty of teaching for all; for the right which was acknowledged in principle was essentially limited in actual practice—first, by the existence of the gift and of an inner vocation, and again by the aim of edification and the necessity for order" (*ibid.*, pp. 139, 140).

## CHAPTER X.

## WESLEY'S ORDINATIONS.

WESLEY'S whole course of action culminated in his ordaining with his own hands, not only Ministers for Scotland, whom he himself addressed by the name of Reverend, and others whom he employed in England, but still more by the startling and decisive step of ordaining **Bishops** for America. By this one step he trampled down the fragile fiction of Diocesan Succession by Divine right, as an elephant crushes with its mighty tread the brushwood of the jungle.

The ordination of Bishops for the American Methodists was a grand step in the advance of Methodism, brave but deeply pondered, and, like the other steps, not taken till it could no longer be sinlessly delayed. In this, as in all his movements, Wesley followed the advice of his stout-hearted sire when he first launched forth on the evangelistic deep as "a fisher of men": "Bear no more sail than is necessary, but steer steady." Before Wesley put his ordaining hands on the heads of the men who were to commence the long line of Ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Wesleyan Methodism in America possessed chapels in most of the principal communities of the Middle States, and in many of the rural towns.

"It was rapidly extending its net-work of ministerial plans over the land. Its members could not be called 'communicants,' for they had not the sacraments. It received its converts into its Churches without baptism in many places, and the children of its families were growing up without that holy rite. It was a Church without a sacramental table. Its early but precarious dependence upon the English clergy for the sacraments had almost entirely failed since the outbreak of the Revolution. The letters which Wesley received convinced him that something must be done, however **extraordinary**, for the relief of the distant and suffering Societies" (Stevens' *American Methodism*).

Wesley applied to Lowth, of London, because the Colonies were under his episcopal jurisdiction. He was not only one of the most learned, liberal, and devoted prelates of the time, but had also treated Wesley with very marked deference and esteem,\* and Lowth

\* The two had met at dinner at the house of a connection of the Bishop's. Mr. Jackson relates that the Bishop resolutely refused to take precedence of Wesley at table, saying with emotion, "Mr. Wesley, may I be found at your feet in another world" (*Centenary Volume*, p. 201).

was, therefore, the least unlikely to comply with the request. Cornwallis, the Primate, who owed his elevation neither to scholarship nor saintship, but to the blueness of his blood, was too much the gentleman to implicate himself in such proceedings. Yet, though Wesley and his clients applied "as members of the Church of England, and desirous to continue so," even Bishop Lowth declined to concede this privilege. The ground on which he did this was, in its cynical indifference, startlingly characteristic of the notions and the state of feeling of the noblest Churchmen of the day: "There are three Ministers in that country already." To which Wesley replies: "True, my lord, but what are these to watch over all the souls in that extensive country?"

All this, alas! was but on a par with the treatment by the Church of England of those whom it still claimed as its own children in America. Surely, a more melancholy specimen of solemn and pedantic fiddle-faddle, where eternal interests are at stake, cannot be found in Church History, than the disgraceful and disastrous neglect of their colonial flock by the prelates of the English Church for more than a hundred years.

Notwithstanding all the outcry against the Wesleys for preaching and praying in unconsecrated places, the Church-folk in the Colonies were obliged to preach and pray in unconsecrated places or not at all; for there was no bishop to consecrate, and none but a bishop could consecrate. Notwithstanding the just importance attached to Confirmation, full four generations were left without it. However rapidly the population might multiply and spread, no one of their number could fill up a gap in the single file of the clergy without undertaking the then formidable risks and expense of time and money entailed by a voyage to and from the mother-country and a year's residence in England, that he might have time to ripen from a deacon into a priest. "One-fifth of all the candidates who set sail for England perished abroad."\* The Bishops of London were the responsible overseers of myriads of Christ's sheep whom they never made any attempt to see at all. The more stoutly the theory was maintained that God's saving grace was strictly locked up in the Episcopal Succession, the more cruel and criminal was this neglect. The Declaration of War and the final achievement of American Independence drove away almost the entire body of the Episcopal clergy. Nevertheless, the learned and excellent Bishop of London could still excuse himself

\* "Life of the Anglican Bishop White," by the "Protestant" Bishop Stevens, in *Leaders and Heroes of the Church Universal*, vol. ii., p. 648.

from complying with the piteous petition of his Methodist flock, through the intercession of Wesley, by replying: "There are three Ministers in that country already"!

In vain Wesley pleads to the episcopal commentator on "the evangelical prophet": "I mourn for poor America, for the sheep scattered up and down therein. Part of them have no shepherds at all; . . . and the case of the rest is little better, 'for their own shepherds pity them not'" (Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*, vol. ii., p. 392).

What then? Must Wesley too be deaf to their hungry bleatings? He who had himself crossed the Atlantic to seek and to shepherd a shepherdless flock; he who for forty years and more had been scouring the hills and dales of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland in search of wandering sheep — was he too to tell these poor sheep in the Western wilderness, "These slighted, starving souls of yours are no concern of mine. Let my Lord of London look to it; it is his affair"? Or could he say, "Ordain bishops for yourselves, and start a new line, since the old line cannot stretch as far as to you"? He could not treat with such contempt their gracious, healthy yearning to have a firm historic hold on the Christendom they had left behind in England. Not one of Wesley's own movements, even the boldest of them, had been a new **departure**; every step had been a fresh **advance** on old lines. He knew full well that this whole theory of Apostolical Succession, in the exclusive line of diocesan episcopacy, was a "fable," destitute alike of historic witness and of Scripture warrant. He knew full well that, so far as the New Testament is concerned, "bishop" and "presbyter" are but two names for one and the same officer; and that, being himself a New Testament presbyter, he was also a New Testament "bishop." Of this now all but universally admitted fact he had recorded his conviction forty years before, as the result of reading and reflection. And now he avowed: "I firmly believe I am a Scriptural **Episcopos**, as much as any man in England or in Europe; for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove" (Works, xiii., 253. Ed. 1872).

The close upon fifteen thousand enrolled members of the Methodist Society at that time in America, with eighty-three itinerant Pastors, as well as hundreds of Local-preachers, not to name myriads of hearers, all of whom looked to Wesley as their patriarch—were these to remain without Christ's sacraments, to live and die unbaptized and without participation in the Lord's Supper, out of regard for a baseless theory.

At the date of Wesley's ordinations, there was no Episcopal Church extant in the United States. The old Colonial Anglican Church was all but defunct; the present "Protestant Episcopal Church of America" was not yet in existence. Its constitution was framed and adopted in September 1785. So Wesley was not trespassing on Episcopal preserves.

When the Anglican Episcopal Church in America found it impossible to drag on any longer without a bishop resident in America, and sent over the Rev. Samuel Seabury to obtain consecration in England, he could get no English bishop to put him in "the Succession," but was obliged to go a-begging to the non-juring bishops, by whom he was at last consecrated at Aberdeen, in November, 1784.\* But poor "Bishop" Seabury had to meet fresh humiliation on his return to America, the Americans "not being satisfied with the consecration of Dr. Seabury." It was not till 1787 that two American clergymen succeeded in obtaining an unexceptionable consecration at the hands of the moderate and obliging Archbishop Moore. If any Episcopalians had cause to complain of Wesley's ordinations, it was the Moravian Bishops, who had been in America for nearly fifty years, and could trace their episcopal lineage through a far purer and far straighter channel than that which drew its descent through the prelates of the papacy. The first Moravian Bishop had, in 1467, been consecrated by a regularly instituted Waldensian Bishop, and the validity of its orders had been acknowledged by the British Parliament in 1749. Even in the days of his highest High-Churchism, such was Wesley's simplicity of taste and deference to Scripture precedent, that he witnessed with admiration, so early as February 1736, in Savannah, the election and ordination of a Moravian Bishop. He thus records the impression made upon him by the scene: "The great simplicity of the whole almost made me forget the seventeen hundred years between, and imagine myself in one of those assemblies where form and state were not, but Paul the tent-maker

\* See Bishop Samuel Wilberforce's *History of the American Church and Memories of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America*. By the Rev. B. de Costa, D.D. Third edition (1880). Of the state of things in the Anglican Episcopal Church at this time, as described in Wilberforce's *History*, Mr. Gladstone remarked in a letter to him, dated October 1844: "The picture is, indeed, a very striking one, and most painful, in particular, as showing the exhausting power upon the inner life of quasi-establishment, such as that which prevailed in Virginia, when its evils are not neutralized by a full Church organization" (*Life of Samuel Wilberforce*, vol. i., p. 211).

or Peter the fisherman presided, yet **‘with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.’** (*Journal*, i., 26.)

For be it remembered that Wesley never set himself to multiply Bishops of the Anglican type. The Methodist Bishops most appropriately derived their “orders,” which were “marching orders,” from John Wesley ; from whom they derived both impulse and example for their noble office and work. The American Methodist Episcopacy is not prelatial, but presbyterial; not hierarchical, but evangelistic; not diocesan, but itinerant, like that of Wesley himself. It exercises “an itinerant general superintendence.” The American Methodist Bishops, like the Lutheran Bishops of Sweden and Denmark, are avowedly on a par with their brethren.

Wesley was clearly bound by every sound sentiment and every true principle to make the most speedy and effective provision possible for the urgent spiritual needs of the widely scattered Christian community which, by his instrumentality, God had called into existence. He could no more disclaim or desert them, than Moses could abandon the host which he had led out of Egypt. The clergy, on whom, in deference to him, they had hitherto relied for the administration of the Sacraments, were scattered. Placed in the disastrous dilemma of ceasing to pray for the King, and thus excommunicating themselves from the English Church, and forfeiting the maintenance supplied from England, or by continuing the liturgical acknowledgment of King George incurring the penalties of treason against the United States, nearly all the clergy had either fled the country or exchanged the clerical profession for some more promising career.

Wesley in vain wrote to Lowth a second letter, entreating the ordination of a solitary Preacher, as authorization to administer the Sacraments, of which the war and famine had deprived them. Bishop Lowth’s finer Christian instincts may well have taught him—yet more emphatically than when he persistently refused to take precedence of Wesley at the dinner-table as an unseemly and unfitting thing—that Wesley himself was the proper person to make whatever arrangements might be necessary for the safety and the sustenance of the Churches which he had called into existence in the now alienated Colonies and in the Western wilds. The American Societies themselves could not but feel this. Were they to be deprived of Christ’s Sacraments because it was not the correct or the convenient thing for English Episcopacy to authorize men to administer them? And who so fit to administer to them the Lord’s Supper, and to baptize their little ones, as the “Ministers by whom” they “believed, even as

the Lord gave to every man"? If any part of Wesley's action in this matter needs excuse, it is his long delay, till the decisive act could no longer be postponed without a schism in the American Societies; as the South threatened to secede rather than forego Christ's Sacraments any longer. They, however, reverently awaited Wesley's decision.

Wesley had, years before, claimed the right to ordain as, to all spiritual intents and purposes, a Presbyter-bishop. Wesley declares: "I verily believe I have as good a right to ordain as to administer the Lord's Supper." Not only had Bishop Stillingfleet taught him that the so-called Apostolic "Succession is as muddy as the Tiber itself"; but Chillingworth had still earlier declared: "I am fully persuaded there hath been no such succession." And since that, Bishop Hoadly had averred: "It hath not pleased God in His providence to keep up any proof of the least probability, or of any moral possibility, of regular, uninterrupted succession; but there is a great appearance, and humanly speaking a certainty, to the contrary." Archbishop Whately declared: "There is not a Minister in all Christendom who is able to trace up with approach to certainty his spiritual pedigree."

The first Anglican theologian to start the Divine Right of Episcopacy was Bancroft, afterwards Archbishop, in a sermon preached at Paul's Cross in 1589. It was, in fact, a mere strategic position, taken up against the Puritans and Presbyterians. The dogma was first defined by Saravia in 1591. It is not the doctrine of the English Church.

Wesley had foregone his right to ordain, or rather postponed its exercise, simply and avowedly on the ground that, in the actual circumstances and for the time then present, it would be rather a hindrance than a "furtherance of the Gospel." For four years longer Wesley held his hand, and it was not until the definitive separation of the American Colonies from the mother-country and the mother-Church, and when the English Establishment had vanished from the States, that, urged by such men as Fletcher—who, but for the grasp of his fatal disease, would have devoted himself to relieve the spiritual famine of the households of America—Wesley yielded to the clear and strong command of duty and to the yearnings of his parental heart.

For the presbyterian ordination of a Bishop, he found a precedent in the practice of the Church of Alexandria for the space of two hundred years. But the extreme necessity of the case was Wesley's full justification. His own account of the matter, dated September 10th, 1784, is straightforward and convincing:

“Lord King’s *Account of the Primitive Church* convinced me many years ago that Bishops and Presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise this right by ordaining part of our Travelling Preachers. But I have still refused, not only for peace’ sake, but because I was determined as little as possible to violate the established order of the National Church to which I belonged.

“But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are Bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, neither any parish Ministers. So that for some hundred miles together there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord’s Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end, and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man’s right, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.

“I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint Superintendents over our brethren in North America. . .

“If any one will point out a more rational and Scriptural way of feeding and guiding these poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

“1. I desired the Bishop of London to ordain only one, but could not prevail. 2. If they consented, **we know the slowness of their proceedings, but the matter admits of no delay.** 3. If they would ordain them now, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us! 4. As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the State and from the **English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again either with the one or the other.** They are now at full liberty **simply to follow the Scriptures** and the Primitive Church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God hath so strangely made them free.

“If any one is minded to dispute concerning diocesan Episcopacy, he may. But I have better work ” (Works, xiii., 251, 252).

His entry in his *Journal* is very concise : “September 1. Being now clear in my own mind, I took a step which I had long weighed in my mind, which I verily believe will be much to the glory of God.”

How grandly has the result justified that belief !

Mr. Tyerman has happily recalled attention to a fact to which Wesley, indeed, alludes, but of which his earlier biographers had lost sight. The Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion, which professed the like relation to the Established Church to that maintained by the Wesleyan Methodists—that of **variation** as contrasted with **dissent**—had been driven by less pressing, but still amply justifying exigencies, to anticipate Wesley’s ordinations by a year and a-half. On March 9th, 1783, six young Preachers were solemnly ordained to the Christian Ministry in Spa Fields Chapel, London, by Mr. Wills, a clergyman of the Established Church. The details are given in the *Life and Times*

of *Lady Huntington*, and in a contemporary *Authentic Narrative of Primary Ordination in Spa-Fields Chapel*.

As Coke and Asbury were delegated by Wesley to exercise a general oversight of both Ministers and people, with visitorial power, Wesley gave them the designation **General Superintendents**. But neither Coke nor Asbury assumed any of these functions till they were freely and unanimously **elected** to the office by their brethren, in Conference assembled. Asbury was "consecrated" to the office; Coke was deemed not to need any such formality. The "Superintendents" had no exclusive power of ordination, but simply of nominating or negating candidates for the Ministry, who were elected by the Conference, and ordained by a Superintendent and co-presbyters.

Asbury, as Wesley's representative in America, had for several years been exercising a supervisory jurisdiction over the Methodist Societies there; but now Coke was commissioned to formally ordain Asbury as "joint Superintendent" with himself, and to confer on him authority to ordain. The settlement of these important arrangements, at the Baltimore Conference in 1785, was rightly termed "the organization" of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Wesley, indeed, had only used the Latin designation **Superintendent**, but the brethren at Baltimore were fully justified in their rendering of Wesley's counsel and deed: "Following the counsel of Mr. John Wesley, who recommended the episcopal mode of Church-government, we thought it best to become an Episcopal Church" (*Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Episcopal Church*, vol. i., p. 22).

Wesley never disowned the acts of the Baltimore Conference, though he did disapprove of their translating his carefully chosen word **Superintendent** into the title "Bishop;" simply on account of the hierarchical associations and assumptions which had gathered about the word. He did not demur to their styling themselves an **Episcopal Church**, and using the word "Bishop" in their *Minutes* as the equivalent of Superintendent, which, in fact, it was. But when the word "Bishop" was agglutinated with the names of the Superintendents whom he had appointed, and plain Mr. Asbury assumed the style of Bishop Asbury, the air of "greatness" which the personal title carried with it gave Wesley "great concern" (*Letter to Asbury*, Works, xiii., 74). Yet that Wesley meant the American Methodist Church to take the episcopal form, and Mr. Superintendent Asbury to perform episcopal functions, is abundantly clear. Wesley, whilst claiming to be "really an **Episcopos**," yet

avowed: "They shall never by my consent call me **Bishop!**" He was enamoured of simplicity. So long as "the **office and work**" were secured, dignitaries were welcome to the title. Coke and Asbury were invested with all the **authority** of a Bishop, but Wesley dreaded their assumption of the airs of a Bishop. The title **Bishop** attached to a man's proper name had in it a twang of prelacy. Yet Bishops they were to all intents and purposes.

In the abridgment and adaptation of the Church of England Liturgy which Wesley provided for the Methodist Episcopal Church, there are distinct forms of ordination for Elders and for Superintendents, corresponding to the forms for Presbyters and Bishops respectively in the English Service-Book, the Superintendents being assumed to have first been Elders. Hence it is evident that Wesley meant to institute and perpetuate a real, although not a titular, episcopacy in the American Methodist Church.

It is certain that the matter was so understood on both sides the water, by Charles Wesley, the British Conference, and the British public; alike by those who hailed and those who denounced the act. Who that has seen and heard Bishop Simpson and his compeers who have visited this country can doubt their worthiness of the title in its truest, fullest sense? Assuredly, if efficiency can justify a Church arrangement, the Methodist Episcopacy is redundantly justified.

Had Asbury and his associates been aware of Wesley's aversion to the title **Bishop**, it would not have been adopted during Wesley's life-time. But the American Methodists felt that their Ministers who were charged with all the responsibilities of Bishops should not be denied the prestige, consideration, and influence attaching to the name.

The solemn appointment of Coke to the General Superintendency of American Methodism, with episcopal functions, was performed in the simplest possible manner in a private room in Bristol. Coke also received from Wesley a documentary authorization. Wesley was "assisted by other ordained Ministers" (Drew's *Life of Coke*, p. 73).

Of these proceedings Wesley wrote: "These are the steps which, not of choice, but of necessity, I have slowly and deliberately taken. If any man is pleased to call this **separating from the Church**, he may" (*Arminian Magazine*, 1785).

### **Did Wesley ever ordain Ministers in Great Britain?**

He did. He was too acute and too candid not to see that his separating and authorizing men for ministerial work and pastoral

charge was in reality an ordination. So early as 1755, he met his brother's objections by saying: "We have ordained already" (C. Wesley's Journal, Oct. 19th, 1755). Charles Wesley adds: "He urged me to sign the Preachers' certificates, and was inclined to lay on hands, and to let the Preachers administer." In 1786 he ordained several Methodist Ministers for Scotland and for the West Indies, authorizing them to administer the Sacraments and put on cassock and bands. In 1789 he ordained and authorized, in like manner, three more, as his assistants in administering the Sacraments to his Societies in Great Britain.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### WAS REABSORPTION POSSIBLE IN WESLEY'S DAY?—THE UNITED SOCIETIES, AS WESLEY LEFT THEM, A VERITABLE CHURCH.

**Was there no period during Wesley's life at which he might have handed over his Societies to the Care of the Clergy?**

As early as 1745, six years after the first Class-meeting, he discussed this question, and again in 1772. His reply is: "Suppose we were willing to relinquish our charge, and to give up this flock into your hands, would you observe the same order as we do now with them and the other souls under your care? You dare not, because you have respect of persons. You fear the faces of men. You cannot. And it is impossible you should ever have any true order, or exercise any Christian discipline. Consider this matter, I entreat you, a little farther. Here are thirty thousand persons" (in 1772), "perhaps somewhat more, of whom I take care. Now, if I am willing to make these over to you, will you watch over them in the same manner? Not such *curam animarum* as you have taken these ten years in your own parish. Poor empty name! Has not your parish been in fact as much a sinecure to you as your prebend?" (Works, viii., 225, 226).

**When, then, Wesley left the People called Methodists, after the plastic system had received the last touch of his organizing hand, Was it just a "Connexion" of "United Societies," or was it a veritable Church on a Scriptural basis?**

It was plainly both the one and the other. The notion that there is any antithesis, much less any antagonism, between the idea or the structure of a "Society" and that of a Church, is as unscriptural and unhistoric as it is general. The Church is so essentially a **Society**, that in proportion as it ceases to be a Society it ceases to be a Scriptural Church. That the People called Methodists, as Wesley constituted them during his life and left them at his death, formed a veritable Church, according to the deliberate, recorded, and proclaimed Church principles of Wesley and his earliest coadjutors, is palpable from the distinctive position taken up by them at the Conference of 1745, in which he pursues the true historic method of investigation :

"The **plain origin of Church-government** seems to be this. Christ sends forth a preacher of the Gospel. Some who hear him repent and believe the Gospel. They then desire him to watch over them, to build them up in the faith, and to guide their souls in the paths of righteousness. . . But, soon after, some from other parts, who are occasionally present while he speaks in the Name of Him that sent him, beseech him to come over to help them also. Knowing it to be the will of God, he consents ; yet not till he has conferred with the wisest and holiest of his congregation, and, with their advice, appointed one or more who have gifts and grace to watch over the flock till his return.

"If it please God to raise another flock in the new place before he leaves them, he does the same thing ; appointing one whom God has fitted for the work to watch over these souls also. In like manner, in every place where it pleases God to gather a little flock by His word, he appoints one, in his absence, to take the oversight of the rest, and to assist them of the ability which God giveth. These are **deacons** or **servants** of the Church, and look on the first pastor as their common Father. And all these congregations regard him in the same light, and esteem him still as the shepherd of their souls.

"These congregations are not absolutely **independent** ; they depend on one pastor, though not on each other.

"As these congregations increase, and as their deacons grow in years and grace, **they** need other subordinate Deacons or **Helpers**, in respect of whom they may be called **Presbyters** or Elders, as their father in the Lord may be called the Bishop or Overseer of them all " (*Minutes*, vol. i., 226, 227).

The Wesleys and their earliest coadjutors, clerical and lay, could not but be aware that in this striking delineation of the way in which Church-government naturally and historically takes shape they were accurately describing the very process by which the Methodist Societies had been called into existence, organized, and unified under the oversight—the episcopacy—of Wesley himself, and the exact relation in which those Societies stood towards him, their Founder, towards their own "presbyters," "deacons," and "**deacon-presbyters**,"

and towards each other. It seems strange, but is not less clear, that Wesley, at least, did not see, at the time, that by the very fact of giving to the regimen under which he had placed the Societies he had formed the express name of "Church-government" he had assumed for them, jointly and severally, the right to be called a Church.

In his letter to his brother-in-law, Hall, before the close of the same year, he distinctly maintains: "That the validity of our ministry" (as Clergymen of the Established Church) "depends on a succession supposed to be from the Apostles" (*Journal*, vol. ii., p. 4). Yet that the words "supposed to be" are advisedly inserted is clear from his subsequent statement on the same page that these points of Anglican theory are "not defensible by the Word of God" (*ibid.*).

But, in less than a month, this illusion was left behind; the whole hypothesis of Apostolic succession being seen to be unsupported by any evidence whatever. He also explains how the illusion had fastened itself upon him (*Journal*, January 20th, 1746): "I read over Lord King's *Account of the Primitive Church*. In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draught; but if so, it would follow that Bishops and Presbyters are (essentially) of one order" (ii., 6).

"The United Societies," as Wesley left them, formed a Church at least as nearly corresponding to the Church of the Apostolic times as any Church in Christendom. But, within itself, it was imperfectly provided with the Sacraments. A very inadequate number of its Ministers dispensed the Sacraments, which, for the most part, were received from the Ministers of the National Church. But notwithstanding this deficiency in a very important particular, comparing the "Established Church" on the one hand and "the United Societies" on the other with the Church-model and the Church-ideal of the New Testament, the latter is seen to be much nearer to the original pattern than the former. Thus the very idea of "the fellowship" (Acts ii. 42) which formed one of the four integral parts of Church-life in the Apostolic times had then—and still has, despite the Methodist revival—so completely died out of the Church-mind, that if one goes to a Church Dictionary to ascertain its received meaning, one either finds it ignored altogether, or else shrivelled into such a definition as this: "**Fellowship**: an establishment in one of the colleges of an university, or in one of the few colleges not belonging to universities, with a share of its revenues." (Hook's *Church Dictionary*.) That is all that a great Church-authority, Church-leader, and Church-historian has to tell, or

seems to know, about "fellowship." And that was all that Wesley, the young "Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford," knew about "fellowship" when he "went into the Church!"

Not only were "the poor of Christ's flock," as Dr. Arnold said of his own time, "the mere recipients of the Church's bounty," but the most devout, talented, educated laity were the "mere recipients" of the sermon and the Sacraments. The right of the laity to use for their mutual edification whatever gifts they might be endowed with had so utterly collapsed, that even the book whose title has passed into a watchword of spiritual freedom—Jeremy Taylor's *Liberty of Prophesying*—contains no hint whatever as to the right of the laity to "edify one another;" but is, with all its golden axioms, just a brilliant piece of argumentation in defence of the right of disestablished Episcopal clergymen to exercise their clerical functions under the Commonwealth to those who preferred their ministrations to any others. "Liberty of Prophesying" by lay-members of its own community there was none; Bishop Taylor never thought of asking for it.

This state of things, so glaringly contrasting with the New Testament Church, was in perfect accord with the dominant Church theories and working—or rather idling—hypothesis of the time. Its very looseness fitted in with the Anglo-Popish theory which had been rubbed in to the Wesleys themselves, first by the ex-Dissenting High Churchman their father in the parsonage at Epworth, and then in Westminster, the Charterhouse, and Oxford. The exquisite accordance of such a denial of fellowship to the laity with the dogma of salvation by Sacraments, with or without any conscious or cognizable effect on the character and conduct, is only too obvious. The prescribed responses in the Liturgy were as large and liberal an allowance of Church activity as could be allowed by the prerogatives of the "Priest"-hood to the passivity of the laic.

A whole class of New-Testament passages, referring directly, expressly, and conspicuously to mutual edification, have become totally unintelligible to Anglican expositors.

Nor were the mutual ministrations so clearly and so earnestly enjoined in the New Testament superseded by a close spiritual attention on the part of the "parish priests." Those who cared for, enjoyed, or even understood or believed in realized spiritual religion were "few and far between." The beautiful picture of a country clergyman drawn by Goldsmith in his *Deserted Village* was, like the village itself, imported from his native Ulster. With very few exceptions, a clergyman held that he met every claim of God

and man so long as he "did duty" at his parish church—that is, stately read prayers and sermon, baptized the children, and gave the Sacrament to those who chose to come. The dearth of zeal in the clergy is sufficiently betokened by the fact that whoever began to preach as if he meant it, and to try to find out whether his preaching had taken any effect, was forthwith scouted as "a Methodist." The fact that the parishes were deplorably undermanned resulted in part from the accumulation of benefices on men of family or favour at Court, or of political importance, or literary eminence. Lucrative offices were heaped on the same individual in utter disregard of the interests of his flock. Thus a Bishop of Exeter in our own time, a vehemently High Churchman, held a lucrative prebendary stall in Durham Cathedral, which prebend or stipend compelled his occupancy of his stall in that cathedral for one month in the twelve. The High Church lexicographer and historian Dean Hook says of these abnormities: "It is not to be denied that during the last century this institution was greatly abused. Patrons made use of it to enrich their own families or political partisans. These things required reform, and forecasting men, seeing no symptoms of improvement, expected that the arm of the Lord would be made bare for vengeance" (*Article Dean and Chapter, Hook's Church Dictionary*). This burst of honest indignation is significantly left out in the last edition, 1877.

Still further, the office of Lay Scripture Reader, established at the Reformation, had died out, and that of deaconess had not yet been thought of.

### But were not the Churchwardens Lay Officers?

Yes; but they had and have no spiritual function whatever. The syllable "Church" in Churchwarden refers to the building called a "church," not to the Church in the New Testament sense. It is the duty of a Churchwarden to see that the fabric of the church is kept up. His office corresponds to that of Chapel-steward or Trustees'-steward in the Methodist economy. One duty which, on their induction into the office, they were sworn to fulfil, was grievously neglected. This duty was a reproachful relic of ancient Church discipline and of lay co-operation in the exercise of that discipline: the duty of "presenting"—*i.e.* reporting to the Bishop or his Chancellor, with a view to Church censure and correction, all persons who had been absent from church for one entire month, or did not attend "the whole time of service and sermon"; "all those that behave irreverently or indecently there, either walking about or talking"

“all above the age of sixteen in your parish that did not receive the Communion”; all guilty of “drunkenness, tippling, and public-houses suffering persons to tipple in them”; “all manner of vice, profaneness, and debauchery”; “all and every the offenders in profane swearing or any wickedness of life.” Moreover, “the Minister” was forbidden “in any wise to admit you to the Holy Communion who, . . . having taken your oaths to present all such offences in your several parishes, shall, notwithstanding your said oaths, or in neglecting or refusing to present, wittingly and willingly, desperately and irreligiously, incur the horrid guilt of perjury.” Wesley, in his **Further Appeal**, makes the following challenge to the clergy with regard to the performance of this duty by the clergy: “I appeal to every Minister of a parish, from one end of England to another, how many Churchwardens have you known in twenty, thirty, forty years who did not thus ‘desperately and irreligiously incur the horrid guilt of perjury’?” (Works, viii., 156).

**Were the Methodists obliged to detach themselves gradually from the Established Church?**

Practically, they were. Large numbers of them were excluded from the Lord's Supper by the clergy of their parish churches. Many Methodist Preachers were compelled to declare themselves **Dissenters**, and many Methodist Trustees to register the chapels as Dissenting places of worship, or forego the benefit of the Toleration Act. They were denounced from the pulpit as “schismatics.” Bishops, in their Charges, twitted and exclaimed against them for not leaving the Church. True, as Canon Overton contends, they were never formally “thrust out” of the National Establishment. **Good reason why:** There was no Church-authority competent to formally excommunicate them as a **Body**.

**Were not the Methodist converts justly charged with transferring their reverence, affection, and confidence from the parochial clergy to their own Preachers?**

In the vast majority of cases this was **impossible**, inasmuch as the converts had never cherished affection or reverence for, or confidence towards, their parish-priest. Affection and reverence for, and confidence in, their spiritual guides were new sentiments to the new converts. Nevertheless, **there** was the practical pinch. The great mass of the clergy saw a body of men calling forth the affection, reverence, and confidence which they themselves had failed to inspire,

and that by doing spiritual and pastoral work which they had left undone, and had no heart to take up. Here again history repeats itself.

The Preaching Friars had been taken under the special patronage of the Pope, who was wiser in his generation than the English clergy; and the parish priests had welcomed this supplementing of their own lack of service, until the heroically devoted attention of the Friars to the plague-stricken, when their own hireling pastors fled from them, naturally attached to these itinerant preachers the popular affection, veneration, and confidence.

In the very nature of the case, it was impossible that Wesley should not be more revered and loved and looked up to by his own people than were either of the Archbishops. His continual tours of inspection, regulation, readjustment, and revival, "as," like a primitive Apostle, "he passed through all parts" of Great Britain and Ireland, "confirming the souls of the disciples," quickening their sense of oneness with each other and of mutual belonging, bringing tidings of their brethren—made them conscious of sensitive union with the remotest Societies. He also trained them to give generously, not only to their own poor and the maintenance of their own Pastors, but for the general sustentation and extension of "the work of God" which Methodism was raised up to accomplish. Wesley could have written to every village Society, in the language of St. Paul to the Romans: "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to the end that ye may be established: that is, that **I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.**"\*

\* The Rev. C. J. Abbey gives the following specimen of the gross neglect of their flocks which was common amongst the highest clergy in the last century: the most popular prelate of the age, the **Low Church** leader, Bishop Hoadly, "for the whole six years he held the bishopric of Bangor, he never once set foot within his diocese; yet he was in the prime of life—from thirty-nine to forty-five years of age. It is curiously characteristic of a century when such abuses were frequent that his contemporaries passed over this negligence, with scarcely any comment by opponents not at all likely to leave unnoticed anything that was evidently and greatly to his discredit" (vol. ii., pp. 2, 3).

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## CHAPTER XII.

STATE OF WESLEYAN METHODISM AT THE TIME OF WESLEY'S DEATH—CHANGES RENDERED NECESSARY BY HIS DEATH—BEGINNING OF DISCUSSIONS OCCASIONED BY HIS DEATH.

**In what condition was Wesleyan Methodism at the time of Wesley's death ?**

Methodism, as Wesley left it, was a compact confederation of Churches, imperfectly supplied with the Sacraments, through unwillingness to detach themselves from the National Church. The truly **United Societies** were consolidated into a "Connexion." "All the host of them" were constellated into a concentric system.\*

Let any one candidly study the picture and ideal of the Church of Christ presented in the New Testament, and compare that picture and ideal, on the one hand with the Established Church in the last century, and with the United Societies on the other, and then let him say frankly whether of the two bore the closer resemblance to that picture and ideal.

**But was not Wesley justly chargeable with leaving his Societies in an anomalous and embarrassing position by advising them to cling still to the Established Church ?**

Unquestionably, Wesley's profoundly consistent career was marked in this respect by an apparent inconsistency ; the heroic inconsistency

\* The Rev. J. J. Lias, M.A., a High Church clergyman, in drawing the picture of the Primitive Church, gives a striking, though, of course, unintentional description of the United Societies under Wesley's care, in contrast with the state of the Established Church both then and now:—"The Christian Church in the Apostles' times presents itself to us as a **community**, or rather as a **federation of communities, in the closest possible mutual relation. Founded on the principle of participation by all in the spirit of love, its members were joined together in the ties of the deepest affection. The local Churches vied with each other in the interchange of good offices. Their members moved freely to and fro, invariably provided with letters of introduction, ensuring them hearty welcome wherever they went.** A . . . profession of membership was required, and every effort was made to secure among the members of the Christian body that harmony and mutual love, that purity, that **sense of responsibility to God** and to men, which must of necessity be displayed by all who venture to **claim fellowship with Jesus Christ.**"

which every one must face who attempts to save his nation or his Church in spite of itself. Every such statesman or Church-leader must, and will, if at all worthy of his enterprise, be sensitively observant of regular forms, to the extreme point to which such adherence is consistent with his enterprise. But when that point is passed, and he finds himself in the dilemma of either sacrificing apparent consistency, or else abandoning the benign and holy cause which he has espoused, he will choose the latter alternative. Hence Wesley's course was beset with both argumentative and practical embarrassments, but, in noble contrast to those who sacrifice to their Church-theories the highest purposes for which the Church was founded, he acted on and acted out his own maxim: "Church or no Church, souls must be saved!" Isaac Taylor truly describes Wesley as "a man too guileless to think of saving himself from the imputation of inconsistency" (*Wesley and Methodism*, p. 85).

**Have the Wesleyan Methodist Conference and Connexion been faithful to the Principles and Precedents which Wesley left them?**

They have; even including his seeming inconsistencies! No man was more willing to learn, or—still harder task—to unlearn, than was John Wesley; and to be guided by the providence and the Spirit of God. We have seen that Wesley made the prosperity of "the Work of God" his highest law. We shall see whether or not the Conference has done the same.

**What changes took place on the death of Wesley?**

The pervasive personality of Wesley had tempered and cemented the Societies. They perceived that this man was raised up by God, like some faith-hero of the olden time, for the deliverance of God's people. On his departure inevitable developments immediately began to appear. Of course, the greatest change of all was the absence of the God-appointed shepherd, who by the space of more than fifty years had "fed" the flock which he had gathered, "according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands." That flock was now staggering under a bereavement not unlike that experienced by the faithful remnant when Elijah, the great Revivalist of the Ten Tribes, was taken from the little, scattered groups of which he had been the itinerant Director. But the Elijah of the eighteenth Christian century left behind him

no Elisha. Wesley had been truly the "Father" and "the chariots and the horsemen" of the wide-spread communities beneath his care; but, through his providentially protracted life, he had given to his "Societies" consolidation, and power to go forward, although on no one man had fallen "a double portion of his spirit."

But a blessed measure of that heaven-enkindled zeal was resting on the pastoral Brotherhood which he had summoned to the work; and the distributed "tongues of fire" were not wanting. Hence the death of Wesley was in no wise the dissolution of Wesleyan Methodism. The weight which had rested on him naturally devolved on the itinerating Pastorate, every one of whom belonged equally to the entire Connexion; and this change was the more readily effected as their **Yearly Conference** was now a legally constituted Body, with full regulative authority. That Pastorate was at once a real Presbytery and a genuine primitive Episcopacy: for the Methodist Superintendent, with one colleague or more, is a much truer successor to the primitive Christian bishop than is the prelate who takes charge of a large diocese. Wesley left five hundred and fifty itinerant Preachers; and on the two sides of the Atlantic, as nearly as could be calculated, "a hundred and forty and four thousand" enrolled members of the host.

And among this common Pastorate there was a strong body of recognised leaders: men of experience, of approved courage and tested wisdom: "men of understanding to discern the times, to know what Israel ought to do;" "elders that outlived" the great captain, "and had known the work of the Lord that He had wrought for Israel."

The patriarchate, rendered vacant by Wesley's death, was very imperfectly supplied by an annually elected President. It was well that there was no one man who could step into Wesley's place; yet the cohesion of the metal of which Methodism was made was most sternly tested.

Happily, the Methodists, as a body, perceived that the mission of Methodism was still in process of fulfilment. They were the legatees not only of Wesley's principles, but also of his plans. The Conference and the Connexion devoutly and loyally resolved to carry out Wesley's work on Wesley's lines and in Wesley's spirit. The Preachers, as a body, went steadily and quietly about their work, giving themselves "to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word;" simply following the leadings of Providence and the guidance of the Holy Ghost with child-like—with Wesleyan—docility and trust. There was

as little of the pedantic Church constitution-maker in them as in Wesley himself.

It seems scarcely possible to watch the continuous evolutions of the Methodist economy without feeling: "This also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, Who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working" (Isa. xxviii. 29). "Ye shall not go with haste, for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel shall be your rereward" (Isa. lii. 12). The Head of the Church has hastened, retarded, or arrested development by His providence and Spirit, according to "the counsel of His own will." Wesleyan Methodism has been much less careful to attain theoretic perfection than to fulfil its mission in the world.

There is a remarkable passage in *Les Apôtres* by the French free-thinker Renan, describing the organizing faculty of the Primitive Church, which applies with wonderful aptitude to that of Wesley and those who worked on his lines: "The tact which guided the Primitive Church in all this was admirable. These good and simple men, with a science profound, because it came from the heart, hit upon the foundations of that grand thing. Nothing had afforded them the model of such institutions. One feels that the still living thought of Jesus guided them in all their acts with a marvellous lucidity" (pp. 56, 120).

Wesley, who had found the work of organization a much more difficult and delicate task than that of evangelization, had confidently contemplated and studiously provided for the permanence of Methodism as an organization, and as a system of doctrine and discipline, and of the Methodists as a distinct "people." He had, not only by his continuous practice, but by express injunction, defined the relation of the Preachers to the Established Church on the one hand, and to Methodism on the other, and had both told and showed them whether of the two to side with—the Established Church or Methodism—whenver their respective claims came into collision; strongly requiring of them, that, "according to his example, they should continue united to the Established Church, so far as the blessed work in which they were engaged would permit" (Myles' *Chronological History of Methodism*, p. 175). Wesley thus expressly limited and conditioned the adherence of his Preachers and Societies to the Establishment, subordinating it entirely to the interests and claims of the work of God.

Methodism had, under his administration, already become departmental, by the establishment of the Book-Room, with a located Preacher as its Steward; by the Appointment of Committees to act

in the intervals of Conference: a "Building Committee for Great Britain" and a "Building Committee for Ireland;" and an incipient Missionary Committee,—“The Committee for the Management of our Affairs in the West Indies” (*Minutes* for 1790, p. 240).

The election of William Thompson as the first President after Wesley was significant. There were at least two men—Coke and Benson—who might have been supposed to have a higher claim to such an honour. But the election of Coke or Benson would have seemed to announce that the idea of the relations between the Church and Methodism to which they so naturally clung, was to predominate. Thompson, being a man of Ulster, had not the same strong preferences.

The death of Wesley demonstrated the love and loyalty of the Methodist people to their devoted Pastors. Their sorrow at the loss of their Patriarch, and their yearning yet hopeful anxieties with regard to the future, can scarcely be more truly indicated than in the words of Isaiah: “He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner; but thine eyes shall see thy teachers” (xxx. 19, 20).

Nothing could be finer than the tone of feeling at the first Conference after Wesley's death: it was subdued, restrained, tender, dutiful. Its aim and spirit were expressed in the first question after the ordinary business had been transacted: “What regulations are necessary for the preservation of our whole economy, as the Rev. Mr. Wesley left it?”

What was the first step taken by the Conference for the Organization and Expansion of Methodism, and in order to fill up the vacuum created by the withdrawal of Mr. Wesley's parental and visitorial power?

A step most wise and timely: the dividing of the three kingdoms into Districts: England into seventeen, Scotland into two, and Ireland into six, Wales and the Channel Islands constituting each a District by itself. The meetings of the “Preachers in Full Connexion” stationed in these Districts were constituted “Committees” of the Conference. This arrangement was at first rightly and necessarily rudimentary and tentative. In this first development of the system of which they were the custodians, Conference followed closely the wise

example of the Founder. They moved with short and cautious steps, no further and no faster than the exigencies of the work required. The Methodist economy was still allowed to grow naturally towards perfectness of adaptation. The object of the new arrangement was "the preservation of our whole economy as the Rev. Mr. Wesley left it." Cases of emergency, which had been heretofore submitted to and settled by the Founder himself, were henceforth to be disposed of provisionally, and pending the decision of Conference, by local courts. These courts were *interim* Courts of Appeal for the Circuits included within each District. When an "Assistant" (Superintendent) of a Circuit found himself at a loss on any grave matter of discipline or administration, he had power to convene all the Preachers in Full Connexion stationed within that District to advise him on the point of difficulty. The assembled brethren chose their own Chairman, who was responsible for reporting their proceedings to the next Conference (*Minutes*, i., 249). At the second Conference the power to call a District Meeting was discreetly transferred from any individual "Assistant" to a Chairman elected by the brethren of the District. This he was bound to do at the instance of either "Preachers or people." Without such request he was forbidden to "interfere with any other Circuit but his own" (*Minutes*, i., 26.), 270).

The greater part of the directive and disciplinary work which Wesley had undertaken in the intervals of Conference, was thus most judiciously assigned, not to the President, but to the various District Committees. "Whenever the Chairman received any complaint against a Preacher, either from the Preachers or the people," he was required to "send an exact account of the complaint in writing to the person accused, with the name of the accuser or accusers, before he calls a meeting of the District Committee to examine into the charge" (*Minutes*, 1797, i., 250). Due provision was made for the trial of a Chairman, in case of serious neglect of duty or other grave delinquency.

In 1797 it was found expedient to elect the Chairmen of Districts by ballot of the entire Conference (*Minutes*, i., 395). Soon afterwards it was found necessary that the District Meeting should be a stated Annual Assembly. After a while, the Chairman's responsibilities were extended, and with them, of course, his rights; and it was enacted: "The Chairman of each District, in conjunction with his brethren of the Committee, shall be responsible to the Conference for the execution of the laws as far as his District is concerned" (*Minutes*, i., 395). This invested the Chairman with a kind of modified and restricted

**Chorepiscopate**, or District-Overseership. Superintendents were recommended to invite on all important occasions the Chairman of their respective District to visit them. A District Minute-Book was ordered to be carefully kept and "handed down," and the minutes for the year were to be forthcoming at the Conference. As a Superintendent might invite the Chairman of his District to attend the Quarterly Meeting of his Circuit, so the Chairman of a District might invite the President to attend the District Meeting. It was soon found expedient to extend the powers and functions of the District Committee. At the District Meeting, the Circuit contributions to the Connexional Funds were brought under careful review, the moneys paid and the accounts rendered to the Chairman, to be carried by him to Conference; and the number of members in the Society in each Circuit was to be reported (*Minutes*, 1806, ii., 346). This was only a more explicit and detailed form of a resolution passed in 1791: "Let the District Committees settle the temporal accounts of their respective Districts annually at such time as is most convenient." This implies that at least one District Meeting would occur during the year.

This arrangement was necessary in order to secure unity of procedure, and an equitable and equable administration of the Methodist Economy everywhere, and to prevent the disintegration of the United Societies into independent Churches. Thus the District Meeting, with its Chairman, succeeded to the visitorial rights and functions of Wesley.

### **Have any changes been made in the constitution of the District Committee, or any other enlargement of its functions?**

Its functions have been considerably enlarged from time to time. By the Conference of 1802 it was entrusted with the important function of examining Candidates for the Ministry. This examination must be conducted "before all the brethren," who were required to investigate: 1. The candidate's "experience;" 2. "His knowledge of Divine things;" 3. "His reading;" 4. "His views of the doctrines of the Gospel;" 5. "His regard for Methodism in general" (*Minutes*, ii., 140). These examinations are very solemn and searching, presenting a strong contrast to those of candidates for "Orders" in the Established Church in former times.\*

\* See description by Bishop Woodford, in the *Life of Bishop S. Wilberforce*. "The candidates" (for ordination), "brought together for examination, . . . were lodged in the various hotels of the cathedral city, under no discipline, with

Subsequently the right of appeal to the District Committee was given to expelled members of the Society.

The authority of the District Committees is essential to the solidity, stability, unity, and well-working of the Methodist economy.

Another wise arrangement was the origination of the **Stationing Committee**. "The Committee of every District in England and Scotland shall elect one of their body to form a Committee to draw up a plan for the stationing of the Preachers in Great Britain, which Committee shall meet at the place where the Conference is held, three days in the week preceding the Conference, in order to draw up the above-mentioned plan" (*Minutes*, i., 256).

In 1805 the following resolution was found necessary: "Let no letters concerning Stations be in the least degree regarded, but such as come from the majorities of regular Quarterly Meetings" (*Minutes*, ii., 289). This important decision recognizes the right of the Quarterly Meeting of the Circuit to signify to the Stationing Committee and the Conference its preferences with regard to its Ministerial appointments.

**Were any other important decisions with regard to the President made by the Conference shortly after Wesley's death?**

It was resolved: "1. The same President shall not be rechosen above once in eight years; 2. The President's powers shall cease as soon as the Conference breaks up." This decision overlooks for the rest of the Connexional year the highest official in the Connexion, since, by the Deed of Declaration, he was constituted President until the election of his successor, and the Connexion was never to be a moment without a head.

Subsequently the names of accepted Candidates for Probation for the Methodist Ministry for whom no appointment could yet be found were placed in the President's hands, as a **List of Reserve**, from which

no aids to devotion, with no hint that they had been assembled for any other purpose than to test their knowledge of certain books. Of their individual characters, modes of thought, motives in seeking Holy Orders, he" (the Bishop) "had no knowledge. It is hardly matter of surprise that such a gathering together of young men degenerated, after the hours of examination were over, into a pleasant reunion of University contemporaries, that the evenings, during which they were left to themselves, became evenings of social enjoyment, if not of boisterous merriment, in which the features of an old college supper-party were reproduced. This is not an exaggerated picture, as many of the elder Clergy can testify from their own experience." Bishop Woodford dates the change for the better from 1815 (vol. i., pp. 330, 331).

he was authorized to supply vacancies which might occur during the year, through death, disablement, "desisting from travelling," or disciplinary action, "when applied to" for that purpose (*Minutes*, ii., 234); and to sanction and arrange for any change in the stations of the Ministers which the necessities of the work might require (*Minutes*, i., 395). Visitorial power was given to him, but only at the written request of some "party concerned, for the purpose of inquiring into its affairs, and, in union with the District Committee, to redress any existing grievance" (*ibid.*). Other less significant responsibilities, more naturally attaching to his office than to any other, were expressly assigned to him.

In 1801 the principle of Lay Representation, which was so strongly embodied in the constitution and prerogatives of the Quarterly Meeting, was still further extended by the affirmation of the right of Circuit Stewards to be present at the District Meetings as consultees during the transaction of financial affairs. It is curious that so important an evolution of our economy is not noted in the *Minutes*, "by mistake of the Secretary," a mistake corrected in a note in the Magazine for that year, at the end of the Index. The resolution runs thus: "That the Superintendent of every Circuit shall invite the General Steward of his Circuit to be present at the annual meeting of the District Committee during the settling of everything relating to the finances of the District; and every Circuit Steward shall accordingly have a right to be present and to advise at the settlement of all financial matters."

**In what way was the question of the dispensing of the Sacraments determined, in the general settlement of Methodist Administration after Wesley's death?**

The question of the dispensing of the Sacraments by Methodist Ministers, and the inextricably connected question of ordination, were definitely raised at the second Conference after Wesley's death. Mr. Wesley's own course of action, the principles he had announced, and the precedents he had created, rendered this question inevitable, and clearly indicated the course which Conference was bound to take. In order to "judge righteous judgment" as to the action of the Conference in this matter, it is necessary to call to mind the exact state of things in reference to the administration of the Sacraments during the later years of Wesley's life. So early as 1759, he had authorized his "Preachers" stationed at Norwich—John Murlin and his successors—to administer the Sacraments to the Society in that city, under what peculiarity of need does not

appear; the result being, however, that, for a series of years, a Methodist Preacher stationed in Norwich was, during the term of his appointment to that Circuit, authorized by Wesley himself to do the work of an ordained Minister in that particular locality.\* Again, in reply to the insolence of his father's successor as Rector of Epworth, and in redress of the deprivation of the Sacraments inflicted on the Methodists of that parish, Wesley had ordained Mr. Woodhouse, a resident in the neighbouring parish of Owston,† to administer the Lord's Supper to the repelled Methodists. Two years before his death, "glancing an eye of pity" on the necessities of the people immediately under his own charge, he had ordained "three of his Preachers" to administer the Sacraments to the Methodist Societies in England, ordaining Alexander Mather, Deacon, Presbyter, and Superintendent (Bishop). "Baptism as well as the burial of the dead had been performed by many of the Preachers before Mr. Wesley's death, and with his consent," in several places. The Methodist Societies in London had long conspicuously enjoyed the privilege of the administration of the Sacraments in their own chapels. The Conference could not delete "the orders" which Wesley himself had conferred on three of their number. They could not deprive London, Wakefield, and other places of the privilege which the Founder had conceded to them. They could not but cherish the like sympathy to that which Wesley had himself shown for Societies either left without the Sacraments, or compelled to receive them from the hands of openly immoral, obtrusively unspiritual, or glaringly heterodox clergymen.

The rule of action to which the "Preachers" bound themselves at the first Conference after Wesley's death, laid down, as we have seen, by Wesley himself, consisted of two broad, deep, opposite, yet parallel

\* John Murlin's printed letter to Joseph Benson in 1794. The shrewd old "Preacher of the Gospel" states the case thus: "One party insist on the **Old Plan**; and the other party believe, if they follow Mr. Wesley's example, they may improve on the Old Plan. As to the **Old Plan**, Mr. Wesley have (*sic*) informed us that '**they had no plan at all.**' By the preparations which Mr. Wesley made before his death, it appears to a demonstration that he intended there should be a further alteration after he was dead. Why did he prepare a Prayer-Book, and inform us on the title-page: '**The Sunday-Service of the Methodists, with other occasional Services**'? **To my certain knowledge, you**" (Joseph Benson) "were guilty of reading prayers and preaching in church-hours."

† Smith's *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, ii., 12. Curiously enough, the scene of the contest more than a century later as to the right of a Methodist Minister to insert the word "Reverend" before his own name on the gravestone of his child.

lines, of which the one should be held to only so long as, and so far as, was consistent with the other. The one was : "That they should continue united to the Established Church ;" the other "so far as the blessed work in which they were engaged would permit." Adherence to the Established Church was distinctly conditioned by the permanence and progress of "the blessed work in which they were engaged."

Moreover, several of the Societies had been deliberately driven by clerical magistrates to register their places of worship as "Dissenting" Preaching-houses, and Methodist Preachers had been compelled to declare themselves "Dissenters," in order to secure the protection of the Act of Toleration. A not inconsiderable proportion of the Societies and Preachers were avowed Dissenters when they entered the Society ; and of the rest it might be truly said, as the venerable Mr. Agar said of himself and his brother-Methodists at York : "If we were not Dissenters, we are 'absenters'" (the canonical designation of those who habitually neglected the services of their parish church). Hundreds could reply, as the venerable Mr. Thompson, of Desborough, Northamptonshire, did to the "Evangelical" clergyman who piqued him on having "left the Church" to join a socially inferior community : "Sir, you are quite mistaken. I have never left the Established Church. That was to me impossible. When I became a Methodist, I had never entered a church in my life, except at a wedding or a funeral."

The inconvenience was as serious as it was obvious of having two kinds of Societies : the one allowed, the other forbidden, to receive the Sacraments in their own places of worship ; and three kinds of Ministers in all other respects equal : one class ordained to administer the Sacraments, another restrained from any such act, and a third allowed to administer them in Scotland or in Norwich, but forbidden so soon as they recrossed the Tweed or the Wensum.

Still further, the death of Wesley greatly aggravated the distress endured by the Societies from a dearth of Christ's Sacraments. Wesley had been accustomed in his apostolic visitations of his wide-spread flock to dispense the Sacraments to them with his own hands. How was that gap to be filled ? He had not been able "to continue by reason of death ;" was no one to take up this part of his work, as well as the other parts ?

These were very grave considerations, and they were very gravely considered.

The principle which Wesley had laid down for his own guidance and

that of the Conference was, as usual, purely practical. It was one, moreover, on which the most candid might take divergent views; whilst partisans and other uncandid people were sure to take a stolidly one-sided view, as such people actually did at the time, and still do to this day.

The candid might easily judge diversely by reason of difference in their respective points of view, habits of thought, previous personal religious history, present religious associations, and differences of temperament and mental characteristics. Some might emphasize the former part of Wesley's injunction: "**Continue united to the Established Church;**" and might comparatively slur the significance of the latter: "**so far as the blessed work in which you are engaged will permit.**" Some might quote the former clause as if it were a rule absolute, and back it up with all similar sayings from the Founder's lips, and all those items of action which accorded with those sayings; and they might make light of his at least equally strong sayings and his immensely stronger actings on the other side. And thus it came to pass. The action of the several Societies was, of course, greatly influenced by the character of the clergy in their respective localities. Hence Wesley had not lain in his grave two months before an **un-**official circular was issued from Hull, insisting, with great earnestness, on the perils which lay in the direction of Dissent. Most likely it was Wilberforce and the Evangelical clergy of Hull who really prompted and inspired the ill-judged Hull circular. To this too eager manifesto the Newcastle Society replied in an official counter-circular, signed by two eminent Preachers—Joseph Cownley and Charles Atmore—and by the Circuit and Society Stewards. They cogently reminded their brethren in the town of Wilberforce and the two Milners of their exceptional ecclesiastical advantages: "You brethren at Hull have Ministers in the Church which perhaps exceed all others for piety and uprightness of conduct." With equal cogency they add: "But do your **pious** Ministers prevent **profligate** sinners from approaching the altar?" This touched one of the gravest and most vital points of the whole question: the collapse of godly discipline in the Established Church.

Sheffield issued a manifesto to the same effect as that of Hull. Bristol sent a strong memorial to Conference on the same side. Birmingham sent forth one circular on the one side and another on the other. A democratic document was also issued from Redruth. Carmarthen, speaking for Wales, and Dublin, for Ireland, pleaded earnestly in the interests of moderation.

No one thought of raising up a new Patriarchate, after the order of

Wesley ; but several leading minds inclined strongly to the establishing of government by **departments**, or "committees," thus putting Wesley's unique and natural authority into commission. Happily, this, too, fell through, being superseded by the far better plan of the **District-Meetings**. Thus, united as the Connexion was in all other respects, yet as to the best form of administration there was, as might have been expected, such a divergence of opinion as demanded from the Conference the utmost caution, moderation, firmness, and forbearance. From Cornwall to the Scottish border, and from Ireland and the Welsh coast to Hull, the Societies were agitated with perplexing questions. Mr. Kilham says in his journal of the time : "We received circular letters from **most** Circuits, some dictating, others advising. Committees of Preachers met in various parts of the nation to consult on the necessary regulations in the Church."

At the first Conference after Wesley's death, Benson's text for the opening sermon had a heart-touching appropriateness : "**Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation : Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.**" The spirit of the Conference cannot be better expressed than in the language of the lofty sixty-eighth Psalm : "**Thy God hath commanded thy strength : Strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought for us.**" It was amidst perilous excitement that the Conference of 1791 assembled in Manchester.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS BY METHODIST PREACHERS IN METHODISTS' CHAPELS—ATTEMPT OF CHAPEL TRUSTEES TO DOMINATE THE CONNEXION—PLAN OF PACIFICATION.

**By what steps of legislation was the final solution of this Sacramental question reached ?**

At the Conference in 1792 the question presented itself with importunity. The Connexional difference of opinion was fairly and fully represented in Conference. "The paroxysm was so sharp" that there was danger of **parting asunder the one side from the other**. By a happy suggestion the Conference was saved from a deliberative

“division” which might have occasioned an organic disruption. The saving suggestion was : We are evidently **not yet ripe** for a decision ; and all that is necessary is a working policy for the ensuing year. Therefore, in the present incertitude, will it not be better to determine our **interim** action, not by vote, but by lot ? This was agreed to. The negative was drawn : “ You shall **not** give the Sacrament this year.” “ The lot causeth contentions to cease, and **parteth between the mighty.**” And, in truth, there were mighty men on either side : men like Benson, Coke and Mather on the one side, and such men as Clarke, Bradburn and Pawson on the other. The submission on both sides was admirable.

Thus was secured another year of reflection and prayer. The calming effect of the decision was apparent in the mutual confidence and concession displayed at the District Meetings, when the anxiety evidently was : “ That there should be no schism in the body ; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”

Even of the disturbed Newcastle District, Atmore, though disappointed, writes : “ We were not only one in heart, but one in judgment ; the greatest love and unanimity were among us. I do hope that neither the devil nor any of his emissaries will be able to divide the Methodist Preachers.”

At the Leeds Conference of 1793, the question recurred. The same open-minded, open-hearted Atmore sums up its history thus : “ I had my fears ; they were disappointed : I had my hopes ; they were exceeded. Never did I more clearly see the gracious interposition of the ‘ God of peace,’ or the manifest defeat of the designs of the sower of discord. The subject was discussed, on both sides, with great candour and impartiality ; great earnestness was evinced, but no undue warmth of spirit ” (Smith’s *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, ii., 22).

Thus everything promised a peaceful and a well-considered solution of the Connexional problems, and the maintenance of the integrity of the United Societies.

The wise postponement of the question of the Sacraments, and the simple maintenance of the exact **status quo** for a year proved to the Societies that the Conference, whilst holding different opinions on that question amongst themselves, were unanimous in their determination “ that peace and union might be preserved.”

The Conference of 1793 proved the stress which they laid on “ **experience** ” as a qualification for the Ministry by passing the resolution :

“Every Preacher, before he be admitted into Full Connexion, shall draw out a sketch of his life and experience.

At the same Conference it was discreetly decided that: (1) “No gowns, cassocks, bands, surplices shall be worn by any (Preacher). 2. The title of Reverend shall not be used by us towards each other in future.” This, of course, implies that it had been used, at least partially, in the past. Wesley himself had set the example with regard to those Preachers whom he had ordained. The distinction thus created amongst the brethren was found to be most inconvenient, if not invidious. Hence the following resolution of the same Conference: “The distinction between ordained and unordained Preachers shall be dropped” (*Minutes*, i., 290). This resolution was rather a levelling up, than a levelling down. It could not delete the orders conferred by Wesley and by those whom he had ordained, but it raised the other “Preachers in Full Connexion;” so that whoever might be put in charge of a Society or chapel where the Sacraments were administered had a right to administer them whether ordained or unordained by imposition of hands. This resolution, therefore, constituted admission into Full Connexion a valid ordination; the only difference being between ordination by lifting up of, and by “laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” In this, the Conference stood on the firmest and clearest exegetical ground. The imposition of hands is not necessary to valid ordination, any more than valid ordination is necessarily conveyed by the laying on of hands. Our Lord did not ordain the “little children” whom their parents brought Him, nor did “the elders of the Church” ordain the “sick” on whom they laid their healing hands, nor did the Apostles induct into the separated ministry the baptized on whom they laid their hands.

It will be noted that Conference did not interfere with the taste and judgment of the people as to the application of the term “Reverend” to their Pastors; they only agreed to forego that title amongst themselves. This was to meet the prejudices of the strong pro-Church Methodists, especially pro-Church laymen. Here is one of many proofs of the reckless injustice of the charge so often brought against the Conference of eagerness to grasp at clerical distinctions.

The Conference of 1793 felt it a “duty” to issue two Addresses to the Members of the Society—“lest the insinuations of any who are enemies to our prosperity and unity should grieve your minds and injure the work of God.” The first states, with the utmost candour and precision, and with force and felicity of expression, the relation which Wesley assumed towards the Established Church: That of

unswerving attachment, except in the instances in which **“ God Himself obliged him ” “ to deviate from it.”**

These deviations, it shows, were made by Wesley **“ with great reluctance.”** The Conference adds : **“ A dilemma, or difficulty of a similar kind, has been experienced by us since the death of Mr. Wesley.”** The **“ dilemma ”** in which Conference found itself with regard to the dispensing of the Sacraments was only a repetition or aggravation of similar dilemmas between the claims of the Established Church on the one hand, and the accomplishment of the Mission of Methodism on the other, between the horns of which Wesley had found himself again and again :

**“ The subject is now come to its crisis. We find that we have no alternative but to comply with their requisition,”** (that of the Societies who asked for the Sacraments in their own sanctuaries and from their own Ministers) **“ or entirely to lose them. O brethren, we ‘ hate putting away ! ’ especially those who are members of the mystical body of Christ. We came finally to the following resolution”** (as, on the whole, **the safest and most conciliatory :**) **“ That the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper shall not be administered by the Preachers in any part of our Connexion, except where the whole Society is unanimous for it, and will not be contented without it ; and even in those few exempt Societies, it shall be administered, as far as practicable, in the evening only.’**

**For we could not bear that the Sacrament, which was instituted by our Lord as a bond of peace and union, should become a bone of contention.** You may clearly see from hence, dear brethren, that it is **the people**, in the instances referred to, who have forced us into this further deviation from our union to the Church of England” (**“ union to,” not with,** a well-chosen word). **“ We cannot, however, we will not, part with any of our dear flock, who love God and man, on account of unessential points. For we love you all, and are the servants of you all for Jesus’ sake.”**

After this noble document had passed the Conference, two **“ printed letters ”** came to hand, addressed : **“ To the Trustees and others in the Methodist Connexion, etc., ”** and **“ signed by many of the Trustees of our New Chapel in London, and of the Broad-Mead and Guinea-Street Chapels in Bristol.”** These letters bitterly condemned by anticipation the gentle and conciliatory permissive resolution of the Conference. To this a manly and Christian answer was returned, which constitutes an effective reply to all **“ High ”** Church strictures on the action of Conference. It takes the **truly high** Church position :

**“ A dispensation of the Gospel has been committed to us ; and we have, in obedience to the call of God, dispensed the Word of Truth ; and God has set His seal thereto. Myriads of immortal souls have been awakened and converted by our ministry. Many thousands of these are safely lodged in Abraham’s**

bosom, and many thousands still remain under our care, 'in the kingdom and patience of Jesus.' **We cannot therefore sport with their salvation;** we dare not throw stumbling-blocks in their way; nor can we bear to lose them, if we possibly can help it, till we present them without spot and blameless before the presence of the Divine glory. You have known us long, and loved and esteemed us long, and, we believe, will receive our solemn declaration as proceeding from upright hearts."

The harmony of the Conference, and the perfect healthiness of its internal relations, is fully proved by extant testimonies of eminent Methodist Pastors who were present, such as Clarke, Pawson, Atmore and Entwisle. The year's increase in the Societies was very large.

The Trustees of various chapels elected "delegates" to meet at Bristol during the session of the Conference there in 1794. They presented an Address to the Conference, claiming for the Trustees of a chapel an absolute veto on the administration of the Sacraments in that chapel. The Conference treated the memorial of the Trustees with the utmost respect, and sent a conciliatory reply. To this the Trustees' delegates returned a most exacting and despotic demand, involving the abandonment of all that Wesley himself had conceded and the refusal of the Sacraments even to those Societies who unanimously required them. They thus constituted themselves the leaders of a real **Church-party** in Methodism, and urged the sacrifice of the unity and the Mission of Methodism to their own view of its relation to the Established Church; seeking to dominate all, Preachers and people alike, who held more truly Wesleyan conceptions. Notwithstanding this dogmatizing unfairness, the Conference appointed a Committee of its own body to confer and reason with them.

Every concession was made to the Trustees which would not infringe on the rights and the responsibilities of others, both Preachers and people. But the Trustees were distinctly given to understand that officers of finance must not be allowed to control those who were in charge of "the spiritual concerns" of the flock; that the Trustees' Meeting must not affect to control the Conference and the Leaders' Meeting; that Trustees in one Circuit must not interfere with Trustees in another; and that no combination of Trustees could be allowed to dictate the procedure and determine the decisions of the body of Pastors to whom the Constitution of Methodism, as fixed by the Deed of Declaration and the confidence of the Methodist people, had committed the spiritual oversight of the Connexion. It was also resolved that when the Trust Funds would admit of it, and "when the

necessities of the Work of God require it, the Trustees shall allow quarterly what may appear requisite for carrying on the work, so that it be not cramped ;” and correspondently, should the Trustees find themselves in difficulties, relief might be voted from any other Society Fund which could afford it. Thus a kind of **solidarity** was established amongst the various Society Funds. Arrangements were also made for the careful keeping and the accurate auditing of the accounts of all Society Funds. These resolutions were conveyed to the “Members of the Methodist Societies” in a Pastoral Address. A list of the Societies to which Conference had given permission for the administration of the Sacraments was printed in the *Minutes*. These numbered ninety-four, in all parts of the country from Cornwall to Northumberland ; seven more being left to the discretion of the Superintendent.

The Trustees of the **Old Chapel** in Bristol were so dissatisfied with these wise and moderate decisions that they forbade the pulpit to the Ministers appointed by the Conference, for no reason whatever but because one of them, having been ordained by Wesley for that very purpose, had in **another** chapel assisted at the administration of the Lord’s Supper. Thereupon the Society and congregation built a new and “noble chapel,” and left the Trustees in possession of the old one. This put an end to “Trustee-tyranny” in Bristol. The core of the case is exactly put by Mr. Moore, the inhibited “Preacher :” “Not content with enjoying **their own** Christian privileges and **trust rights** in their fullest extent, without any restraint or molestation whatsoever, they have invaded ours.”

Unhappily, defensive or retaliatory irregularities were committed on the other side.

Several other bodies of Trustees were dissatisfied with the decisions of the Conference. They especially claimed the right of vetoing the appointment of **any** particular Preacher to the chapel of which they were the Trustees. To concede this was impossible. 1. It would have given to bodies of men not necessarily nor invariably distinguished by mental and spiritual superiority a most important prerogative not possessed by the Local-Preachers and the Leaders ; and as the Trustees were usually chosen from amongst the wealthier members of the Society, it would have created in Methodism a **Plutocracy**, or government by the rich, as alien from its genius as perilous to its mission. 2. As there were several bodies of Trustees in the same Circuit, it would have created endless division. 3. It would have rendered the task of stationing the Preachers impracticable. 4. It would have involved an unconstitutional disregard of the Deed of

Declaration. The Trustees of the Church-party were ardently bent on reducing the Pastors of Methodism to a body of hired lay-agents under the control and direction of Chapel-Trustees.

The first battle which the Conference had to fight was with the Church-party in Methodism, represented by Chapel Trustees. The Conference took the side of the people, and appealed to the people against the exorbitant demands of the Trustees.

The Conference, however, while stedfastly maintaining the rights of the Societies at large, made several important concessions to the Church-party. 1. It forbade "preaching in Church-hours, except for special reasons, and where it will not cause a division." 2. The Lord's Supper was not to be administered where the unity and concord of the Society could be preserved without it. 3. The like rule was applied to Baptism, although Mr. Wesley had permitted its administration by the Preachers. Lastly, it was decided that, in the trial of a Trustee, his brother-Trustees should be conjoined with the Leaders' Meeting, and that a Preacher charged with immorality might be tried by the Preachers, Trustees, and Leaders of his Circuit.

The Preachers were straitly charged to abstain from all agitation, or side-taking, or initiative, "concerning the new or the old plan." It was also most wisely and necessarily determined: "No pamphlet or printed letter shall be circulated among us without the author's name." Both these resolutions Mr. Kilham set at nought.

In short, the utmost possible effort was made to satisfy every party, and unite the whole, so that the Conference could with boldness address the Societies in these words: "O brethren, be as zealous for peace and unity in your respective Societies as your Preachers have been in this blessed Conference. Let the majorities and minorities on both sides exercise the utmost forbearance towards each other; let them mutually concede one to the other as far as possible, and by thus bearing each other's burdens fulfil the law of Christ. Let all resentment be buried in eternal oblivion."

The conciliatory spirit of the Conference was happily reciprocated by the Trustees' delegates, who thus concluded their reply to the "propositions for general pacification and discipline:" "We shall cheerfully acquiesce in the final determination of the Conference."

The Conference was too sagacious to burden itself at such a time with practical problems which might very well stand over. "Sufficient unto the day was the 'question' thereof."

In 1795 a large body of "Trustees' delegates" met at Manchester, at the same time as the Conference. They broke up into two opposite parties, with separate places of meeting. After a week's discussion, however, proposals were agreed to by both, and submitted to the Conference. These were carefully considered and returned to the Trustees with suggested modifications, and a few Preachers were selected to confer with the delegates. This conciliatory policy triumphed. At the united meeting of Preachers and Trustees, regulations were agreed on unanimously. Both bodies of Trustees' delegates sent resolutions of thanks to the Conference for its "liberality and candour," and its evident attempt to meet the views of both parties. It cannot be denied that both bodies of Trustees had the fullest and the fairest hearing.

But that which rendered the Conference of 1795 an epoch in the history of Methodism was the drawing up and adoption of the document rightly described as **The Plan of Pacification**: Pacification being its aim, and, to a very happy extent, its result. Its preamble dwells on "the awful situation of our affairs. We trembled at the thought of a division and its dreadful consequences, and therefore determined to set apart the first day of the Conference as a day of solemn and real fasting and prayer." On the second day of Conference a committee of nine was chosen by ballot. The result of the ballot demonstrated the moderation and equity of the Conference, since no one could avoid seeing that the nine names were those of the sagest, safest, and most experienced men on both sides of the question. The Committee took six evenings in the preparation of their plan, which, after "the alteration of a single article," was **unanimously adopted** by the Conference.

This memorable enactment guaranteed to "the majority of the Trustees, or the majority of the Stewards and Leaders of any Society," a right which was the necessary correlative of, and counterbalance to, the power of stationing the Preachers secured to the Conference by the Deed of Declaration—namely, the right to put upon his trial "any Preacher appointed for their Circuit" whom they believed to be "immoral, erroneous in doctrines, deficient in abilities," or as having "broken any of the rules" embodied in the Plan of Pacification.

It also determined that "the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered in any chapel except the majority of the Trustees of that chapel on the one hand, and the majority of the Stewards and Leaders belonging to that chapel (as the best qualified to give the sense of the people) on the other hand, allow of it." The same rule

was made applicable to "the administration of Baptism, the Burial of the Dead, and service in Church-hours." But a changed majority could not change the usage without an express order from the Conference.

The conspicuously answered prayer of the Conference was for grace

"To steer our dangerous course between  
The rocks on either hand ;  
And fix us in the golden mean,  
And bring our charge to land."

Methodism was in the most imminent danger of being crushed between two inexorable parties—the Church-party, inspired by Wesley's highly cultivated friend, Alexander Knox, and by certain Trustees of chapels ; and the party of democratic Dissent, led on by the impetuous young Alexander Kilham. It really was what the title to Jonathan Crowther's pamphlet (1795) termed it : "**The Crisis of Methodism.**" Crowther shows conclusively that "the plans and exertions of the combined Trustees were as much against the privileges and rights of the people as against the independence of the Preachers and the authority of the Conference." The Church-party Trustees and Mr. Kilham were exactly alike in this practical respect—they "would dictate to both people and Preachers." In the name of "Liberty," as well as of **Trust Property**, the varying needs, capabilities, and predilections of the Methodist people were to be ignored. Mr. Kilham and the Church-party alike obviously preferred a minimised and mutilated Methodism to a united Methodism which was not quite after their own model. But the Church-party came to terms, Mr. Kilham would not.

Throughout this perilous crisis, the Conference bore itself with paternal dignity and gentleness. Its wise watchword was "**Pacification.**"\* This conciliatory spirit saved Methodism. "Blessed are the peacemakers."

It was admitted by Alexander Knox, that the strength of Wesleyan Methodism lay in its "peculiar catholicism" (meaning thereby catholicity). Wesley's Methodism had been "an asylum for persons of every denomination," "open to all parties." Jonathan Crowther nobly contends that the Methodists are not "the partisans of denomination." "Our call is not to prop up human establish-

\* It is noteworthy that Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, writing to Mr. Gladstone about the strife of parties in the Established Church, says : "What we want is a **Plan of Pacification.**" This phrase he had become acquainted with as his father's biographer.

ments, nor yet to pull them down, but to go about doing good. And it is our duty, at all times and in all places, to proportion our degree of adherence to or separation from the Church by this principle of 'doing good,' pursuing the best ends by the best means. To act otherwise would be to depart from our calling."

This was precisely Wesley's own position. Whenever he seemed, for the moment, to be willing to risk the interests of Methodism in favour of the Established Church, it was obviously a mere nutation of the axis, not a deflection from the orbit, of that evangelistic planet of the eighteenth century.

The solid position taken up by the Conference at that time is well defined by Mr. President Pawson :

"It will by no means answer our ends to dispute with one another as to which is the most Scriptural form of Church-government. We should consider present circumstances, and endeavour to agree upon some method by which our people may have the ordinances of God, and at the same time be preserved from division. I care not a rush whether it be Episcopal or Presbyterian. I believe neither of them to be purely Scriptural. The design of Mr. Wesley will weigh much with many, which now evidently appears to have been this: he foresaw that the Methodists would, after his death, soon become a distinct people, and he wished to preserve all that was valuable in the Church of England among the Methodists."

The principle of the Conference was: For theories "destroy not the work of God." They made the peace and the unitedness of the "Societies" their first and great concern, and the indications of Providence their guiding-star. The perils of the position were so extreme and perplexing that nothing but a "single eye" could have kept them clear of "the rocks on either hand." To borrow and adapt an illustration from Plato, Wesley, like a great magnet, had attracted and attached multitudinous steel filings. Now that the magnet was withdrawn, it would be seen whether the filings themselves were sufficiently magnetized to hold together.

The instances of Wesley's docility, ductility, and candour are very striking. His immolation of his own dearest and most cherished prepossessions, at the call of Providence or the enlightening Spirit, reminds one of his line :

"Lo! at Thy word our Isaac dies."

In his *Principles of a Methodist*, he writes: "When Peter Böhler, as soon as I came to London, affirmed of true faith in Christ that it had these two fruits inseparably attending it, 'Dominion over sin and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness,' I was quite amazed,

and looked upon it as a new gospel. I was not willing to be convinced of this. Therefore I disputed with all my might ; for all the Scriptures relating to this I had been long since taught to construe away, and to call all Presbyterians who spoke otherwise. I was beat out of this retreat too by the concurring testimony of several living witnesses. Here ended my disputing. I could now only cry out : ‘ Lord, help Thou my unbelief ! ’ ”

**What leading principles of organization and administration were implied in the Plan of Pacification ?**

(1) The first principle was the recognition of the necessary, constitutional responsibility and right of the Conference to appoint Methodist Preachers to Methodist chapels.

**But is not the power of the Conference to appoint Ministers to the Circuits a hardship to the Societies and congregations in the Circuit ?**

On the contrary ; in the way in which that power is actually exercised, it is a very great boon and convenience to the Societies and congregations. For, in the first place, each Circuit has the fullest right to invite whatever Minister it chooses ; which invitation, if accepted by that Minister, takes effect, unless the general interests of the Connexion are believed to require some other appointment.

A “ Representative ” to the Stationing Committee is chosen at every May District Meeting, by the conjoint vote of Ministers and laymen. He is therefore quite as much the Representative of the Circuits as of the Ministers in his District, and communicates with the Circuit Stewards as to the wishes of the people. These he lays before the Committee. The draft of the Stations recommended is printed and published immediately. If any Circuit be dissatisfied with its appointment, it usually communicates that fact at once to the Representative ; one or both of its Circuit Stewards often coming to Conference to secure an interview with the Representative and others. The facts are then freely stated to the Conference and argued upon, and often days are devoted in the Conference to the equitable adjustment of conflicting claims. An amended Draft of the Stations is then published, and time allowed for communicating with the Circuit Stewards before the final “ corrected ” Stations are decided on. The business of stationing the Ministers is managed in a much more summary manner in Republican America—by the Bishops.

**Non-intrusion** is practically secured by the fact that no one enters our Ministry unless he secures the approval of the Quarterly Meeting, opportunity given to the people to procure the removal from the Circuit of any Minister whom they may deem unsuitable after one year's ministrations. The immense advantages enjoyed by a **Connexion** of Churches cannot be secured without the incidental and occasional foregoing of the advantages of Independency. It is the very principle of Connexionalism to postpone local and temporary interests to the larger and more lasting. The lodging of the decisive authorization of Ministerial appointments in the hands of the Conference has been denounced as "interference with the ecclesiastical affairs of particular Churches."\* But surely Churches have a right, if they so please, to merge their temporary, local interests in wider and more abiding interests, and to prefer a broad consideration of a number of connected Churches to a narrow, local self-regard. Surely, it is a much more objectionable and annoying "interference with the ecclesiastical affairs" of any "particular Church" when a wealthier Church strives to induce the Pastor of a poorer Church to leave his flock, who are pleased with him and proud of him, to come to them. But this is reckoned quite correct in Independent Churches. Of course, the real question is a practical one: Whether of the two incompatible systems works the better **on the whole, all round, and in the long run.** The inconveniences and evils of the Independent system are very grave indeed. Within a short time lately four of the principal Independent Churches in the north of London, having each lost its distinguished Minister, have been left **pastorless for two full years**, because the Church could not agree as to which of the long succession of Ministers invited to preach what were, and were known to be, really **trial-sermons**, should be chosen.

**To whom does the Trust-Property of Wesleyan Methodism belong?**

Our chapels, and other Trust properties, **belong to Wesleyan Methodism.** No one has any private estate in any single item of Trust-property. The moment a Minister makes use of a Wesleyan Methodist pulpit for the utterance of doctrines contrary to our standards, he is a trespasser in, and a usurper of, that pulpit; which he is perverting to his personal views; and he can, and ought to, be ejected by readily employed constitutional process. The rights of Ministers, Trustees, and Members are comprised within the area of Wesleyan-

\* *The Pastoral Function*, by Rev. M. Hill (a Congregationalist), p. 52.

Methodist doctrine and worship. The Ministers have rights—namely, to preach the Wesleyan-Methodist doctrine, and nothing contrary thereto ; and to conduct Divine worship and administer the Sacraments and discipline according to the Wesleyan-Methodist Order. The Trustees have rights—namely, to prevent any one from diverting the property to any other purpose, and the collecting and disbursement of the chapel income. The members have rights—namely, to hear the pure Wesleyan-Methodist doctrine, to join in Divine worship and receive the Sacraments, and to take part in meetings for Fellowship according to the Wesleyan-Methodist rules.

The second principle of the Plan of Pacification was embodied in a most important provision, which forms a very strong element of popular power, in the Wesleyan-Methodist polity—the **Mixed District Meeting**:—

“ If the majority of the Trustees, or the majority of the Stewards and Leaders, of any Society believe that any Preacher appointed for their Circuit is immoral, erroneous in doctrines, deficient in abilities, or that he has broken any of the rules above mentioned, **they shall have authority** to summon the Preachers of the District and all the Trustees, Stewards, and Leaders of the Circuit, to meet in their chapel on a day and hour appointed (sufficient time being given). The Chairman of the District shall be the President of the assembly, and every Preacher, Trustee, Steward, and Leader shall have a single vote, the Chairman possessing also the casting voice. And if the majority of the meeting judge that the accused Preacher is immoral, erroneous in doctrines, deficient in abilities, or has broken any of the rules above mentioned, he shall be considered as removed from that Circuit, and [the Meeting] shall have authority to suspend the said Preacher from all public duties till the Conference” (**Plan of Pacification**, *Minutes*, vol. i., p. 341).

This Regulation has been acted on with effect in a case of ministerial incompetence ; the suspension by the District Meeting being followed by the non-appointment of the incompetent Minister to any subsequent Circuit. This rule gives to the Wesleyan Methodist people security against the continuance of any unfit person in the Wesleyan-Methodist Ministry.

The Plan of Pacification provided that “ at least the Lessons in the Calendar ” should be read in Methodist chapels.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

## MR. KILHAM'S AGITATION.

**Did the Plan of Pacification accomplish its purpose ?**

Not altogether, at once. At the close of the Conference of 1795, it seemed as if the oneness of the United Societies was secured in the only possible way : by the successful "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The brethren at Manchester shook hands with each other with beaming heartiness and hope, and betook themselves to their several stations in the spirit of the parting hymn—

" The vineyard of the Lord  
Before His labourers lies ;  
And lo ! we see the vast reward  
Which waits us in the skies."

The **pacified Societies** "rejoiced for the consolation," and were prepared to keep "the truce of God." Alas ! this God-ordained peace was forthwith broken by one young Methodist Minister.

**Who was this Minister ?**

Alexander Kilham.

The career of the first great Connexional agitator is so instructive and significant that its outline must be given here. Our data are derived from unquestionable contemporary sources.\*

The fact that the native place of the first great divider of Methodism was also that of John and Charles Wesley is not without significance. The closing against Wesley of the pulpit of his father's church by his father's successor ; the refusal of the Lord's Supper to him and to his people ; the false and bitter accusations of both him and them by the rector, from the pulpit ; and the provision which Wesley consequently felt obliged to make for their reception of the Sacraments elsewhere than in the parish church—all this could scarcely fail to loosen the hold upon them which the Established Church might otherwise have had.

\* Mainly from Mr. Kilham's own writings, and his official biography "by the President and Secretary of the New Methodist Connexion," published in 1798, shortly after his death, and a subsequent *Life of the Rev. A. Kilham*, published by the Methodist New Connexion Book Room, in 1838. The former will be distinguished as *Life of Mr. Kilham*, the latter as *Life of Rev. A. Kilham*.

In his nineteenth year Mr. Kilham was converted to God. Two years later he began to preach; and shortly after that the eminent Methodist Preacher Mr. Brackenbury, who throughout his long ministerial career was popularly spoken of as "Squire Brackenbury," being almost the only wealthy itinerant in the Connexion, visited Epworth; and young Kilham, hearing that the good evangelist was looking out "for a young man to travel with him," applied for the situation and was accepted.

Mr. Kilham says of his parents: "They taught me to read" (*Life of Mr. Kilham*, p. 1). He also informs us: "My father by trade was a weaver, and brought me and my brothers up to the same occupation" (*New Connexion Methodist Magazine*, ii., p. 43).

The relation that grew up between the young working-man and the preaching "Squire" was most creditable on both sides. The "Squire" found that he had not only been guided to a capable and faithful personal attendant, but also to a serviceable co-evangelist, who could aid him in his soul-saving work, and supply his place in the pulpit on occasion of his own not infrequent failures of health. After they had itinerated together over various parts of England, Mr. Brackenbury being sent by Wesley to evangelize the Channel Islands, took with him young Kilham, who had by this time become much more like a travelling companion than a confidential servant. In the Channel Islands, as in England, Mr. Kilham proved himself to be an intrepid outdoor Preacher.

In 1784, Mr. Brackenbury went abroad in search of health, and left young Kilham at his mansion in Lincolnshire, with permission to help the overworked Methodist Preachers in the then enormous Grimsby Circuit. Once, when Kilham was preaching in the parish of which the Rev. E. Brackenbury, the "Squire's" brother, was the vicar, that clergyman interrupted him, calling in question the soundness of his doctrine. Hence ensued a long discussion. The vicar, not having been able to silence the young man on theological grounds, summoned him before the quarter-sessions as an unlicensed Preacher. This obliged Mr. Kilham to take out a licence, on the presentation of which the Rev. E. Brackenbury, who was on the bench, objected that the Act only applied to "Dissenters," and that Mr. Kilham, being a Methodist, could not come under that designation. Mr. Kilham was thus compelled to "take the oaths as a Dissenter." Being thus against his will a literally sworn and registered Dissenter, he regarded himself as publicly committed to sustain that character. He had asked to be licensed as "a Methodist Dissenter."

In 1785, Mr. Kilham "offered himself to Mr. Wesley, and was engaged as one of the Preachers in his Connexion," and received an appointment in the *Minutes* to the Circuit in which he had been a Local Preacher. In the third year of his probation—1788—he tells us, his "colleague" talked with him "about alterations necessary in our Church-government;" but that he himself made up his mind to continue his connection with the Conference, "provided there be no alteration after Mr. Wesley's death that shall make it most advisable to desist" (*ibid.*, p. 41). This is curious in the light of his subsequent action.

During the third year of his probation, he was introduced to a lady who enjoyed an independent competence, and was wishful to devote herself and it to the cause of God. The interview resulted in a matrimonial engagement. This accession to an independent competence was not without an important influence on Mr. Kilham's future career. In any case, the bare allowances of a Methodist Preacher would not have enabled him to disperse his various publications by hundreds to all parts of the kingdom, to every one on whom he thought they might tell, through the then expensive post, from Newcastle, Aberdeen, and Alnwick.

How thoroughly he was resolved to sustain the character of "a Dissenter" which a clerical magistrate had compelled him to assume, he showed when "one of the leading men of the Society" at Whitby, where he was then stationed, wished him to have his child "baptized by the clergyman." Mr. Kilham declined, on the at least very intelligible ground that a sworn and registered "Dissenter" could not, with any show of consistency, "have recourse to the Establishment on such an occasion" (*Life of Rev. A. Kilham*, p. 122). This occurred during Wesley's life.

That Mr. Kilham allowed hostility to the "National Church" to become a passion is obvious from the extracts from his journal officially published. Even before Wesley's death, he makes this entry: "I hope God will open the eyes of the Methodists to see their sin and folly in their inconsistent connection with the Church" (p. 46). And, again, shortly after Wesley's death: "The curse of God is upon us, and we cannot prosper till the Lord pardon our having bowed in the house of Rimmon" (p. 49). It evidently did not occur to him that the "sin and folly" of the Apostles and the Church of Pentecost must have been incalculably greater "in their inconsistent connection with the Church" whose rulers were "the betrayers and murderers" of Christ Himself.

So soon as the Hull circular appeared, a few weeks after Wesley's death, urging continued union with the Established Church, Mr. Kilham, being then in the second year of his "full connexion" with the Conference, published an anonymous circular, which, to conceal the authorship, he posted from York. The tone of this document is moderate as compared with the writer's subsequent publications. Much of it is solid and well-reasoned, and perfectly fair as a reply to the Hull manifesto. Its ill-omened element is its slighting way of treating the memory and example of the so recently departed Wesley. The practical summing-up of the production is: Mr. Wesley is dead; why should we concern ourselves with his views? Let us forthwith reconstitute, and henceforth administer, the Connexion according to our own notions.

Mr. Kilham was in 1793, though so young, entrusted with the superintendency of the Aberdeen Circuit, where he could administer the Sacraments without interference from any quarter. No expression of kindly feeling could have been more emphatic.

At that time, a favourite form of inflammatory publications was a huge handbill. A few months after his arrival at Aberdeen, Mr. Kilham composed and widely circulated a big broadside, which professed to be the production of two laymen. It was addressed to "all Local-preachers, Circuit Stewards, Town Stewards, Class-leaders, and intelligent members in the Methodist Societies and congregations." In this document, the personated laymen are made to condemn the notice which the Conference had taken of one of his pamphlets, of which he thus writes in their name: "The pamphlet alluded to was written on liberal principles, and, in our opinion, the author deserved the thanks of the Conference instead of being censured. We have read it ourselves, and wish every thinking person in our Connexion would peruse it."

In this pseudonymous production he also assails the measures of two Conferences to which he had been a party, and he concludes with the threat: "We will be heard, or our resentment shall be felt." That one word, "resentment," exactly describes the feeling which the broadside was calculated to excite. One of its main objects of attack was the **Preachers' Fund**, which was a brotherly Benefit Society, sustained by the annual subscriptions of the Ministers themselves, supplemented by voluntary contributions from benevolent laymen. The Conference of 1792, which Mr. Kilham had attended, had fixed the minimum allowance from the two funds to a disabled Minister or Minister's widow at £12 a year, to be gradually raised in proportion to the number of years during which a Minister had served the Con-

nexion. Mr. Kilham denounces, through his personated laymen, these simple and sensible arrangements as "grossly absurd," "notoriously unjust" and "unscriptural."

But so carefully were the parentage and the birthplace of this document concealed, that its authorship was never suspected until Mr. Kilham claimed the honour of it. It had no printer's name; it was dated "**London, February 28th, 1793.**" It was disseminated, post-paid, throughout the Connexion. It was not posted in Scotland, nor was it directed in Mr. Kilham's handwriting. Of the legitimacy or excusableness of such modes of attempting to force on Church-measures, readers will judge according to their own standard of ecclesiastical ethics. Along with some sensible suggestions, which anticipated subsequent action of the Conference, it put forth extravagant proposals, such as the election of the Class-leaders by the suffrage of the entire Society, and their appointment, not to any particular class, but to rotatory visitation of all the classes. But its great evil was its being a letter of intimidation written under assumed names by one member of the ministerial brotherhood against the rest.

He followed up his broadside by a polemical pamphlet, entitled *Priscilla and Aquila*.

Mr. Kilham attended the Bristol Conference in 1794, and admits that the discussions in Conference "ended in granting our Societies a greater degree of liberty" (p. 73). But he goes on to say, "The base shifts of Mr. Benson and his party are truly execrable in the sight of all thinking persons" (p. 74).

Early in 1795, he printed and posted to the Preachers a circular of seven quarto pages, signed *Martin Luther*, "From the ruins of the Church of France." Having propounded his own views of Church-government, which are widely different from those of "Martin Luther," he pronounces: "None can oppose this liberty but narrow-minded bigots and lordly, overgrown bishops. The devil and his angels, with all their helpers, cannot hinder the people," etc. He again pretends to be an outsider, and thus stigmatises *Minutes* of Conferences of which he had been a member: "What appeared in your *Minutes* might have been expected from the conclave at Rome, or from a bishop's court in England; but the sentiments are so illiberal that they ought to be expunged from every record of your Connexion, and if possible from the memory of all that have heard them" (pp. 3, 4, 6). Of the election of Chairmen of Districts by the Conference, he writes: "This disgraceful limb of Antichrist will soon be torn from us."

“Before setting out for Conference” in 1795, Mr. Kilham issued another pamphlet under the signature “Paul and Silas.” It bears no printer’s name nor sign of the place from which it issued.

Mr. Kilham was a party to the **Plan of Pacification** passed at this Conference, not only by his vote, but also by his voice—his express approval. He records as his reason for approving of the **Plan**: “1. We have gained a great deal more than we expected. 2. Our people are not prepared for more at present. 3. In two or three years we shall have all that we wish.—August 2nd, 1795.”

By the Conference of 1795, Mr. Kilham was entrusted with the superintendency of the Alnwick Circuit. All the Societies in that Circuit which desired the Sacraments from their own pastors in their own chapels had received full liberty to enjoy them, and were at peace. He had recorded his conviction: “Our people are not prepared for more at present.” Yet he forthwith set himself to stir them up to demand more, and that without delay. He produced, and had printed at Alnwick, a few days after his arrival there, a pamphlet, this time with his own name, entitled: *The Progress of Liberty among ‘the People called Methodists.’ To which is added the Outlines of a Constitution.* In this he required that Wesley’s *Notes on the New Testament*, and the *Sermons* made the standards of Wesleyan Methodist doctrine, should be submitted to the judgment of the Societies throughout the land, and that the standards should be altered in accordance with the collected judgments of the majority of the members. He demanded the adoption in the smaller Societies of the Congregationalist plan as to the admission and the exclusion of members, though he confessed the impracticability of that plan in our larger Societies.

He also demanded lay-delegation in the Conference, without any distinction between financial and economic affairs on the one hand and matters purely pastoral on the other. But the functions of the Conference so constituted were to be reduced to a minimum, consisting of little more than the recognizing and registering of reports from the District Meetings and the balancing of financial deficiency and surplus.

The book contained such passages as these: “We detest the conduct of persecuting Neros, and all the bloody actions of the great whore of Babylon; and yet in our measure we tread in their steps” (p. 19). He accused Wesley of introducing into the pastorate grievously incompetent men, brought out “in a dark unfair way” (p. 33). He charged Superintendents with the most despicable motives in putting forward candidates for the ministry (pp. 33, 34). He described as

"a solemn farce" the stated examinations into the character of the Preachers, which "only makes sensible people laugh at us" (p. 38). He insinuated that the Connexional funds were disgracefully lavished away (p. 54). He accused his brethren of "downright swindling" (p. 43), and that upon his personal knowledge: "I have known," etc. He thus described a class of travelling Preachers: "An old drone that has palmed himself on Circuits, who received him as a scourge from God" (p. 53). He represented one venerable Preacher as having "the face of a calf," another as having "unmerciful teeth." He says of himself and his brethren as a body: "We whine and cant like begging friars. What Jesuit ever acted a baser part than we act?" (p. 54). These direct charges were followed by innuendoes as to what "a tale" he "could unfold." "I could relate four or five true narratives," etc. (p. 45).

This sudden sending forth of "the fiery cross" throughout the Connexion could not but shock the noblest-natured men in Methodism. First of all, it set his own Circuit, to use his own words, "all in a flame" (*Journal*, p. 92). "In meeting the classes at Alnwick, I found many things to encounter of a trying nature; several persons in this Society are like thorns in my side" (p. 102). In truth, the Alnwick Methodists, having gained all they wished for, wanted a Revival, not a "reform agitation." They were pained to find that their new Superintendent had resolved to make their quiet nook of simple-hearted Methodism the battle-field of a fierce Connexional conflict.

Mr. Kilham sent a large parcel of his agitating and accusatory pamphlets to the Book Room, "to be forwarded with the magazines, etc., to the Preachers." This brought the production under the notice of the London Book Committee. They, of course, regarded the pamphlet as Connexionally actionable, and wrote to the Chairman of the Newcastle District, "as persons implicated in Mr. Kilham's charges," claiming a Special District Meeting, to take cognizance of its "most malicious expressions against the body of Preachers in general, and against respectable individuals in particular." "The pamphlet has an immediate tendency to prejudice our people against their Preachers, and to destroy the work of God. We look up to you and the other members of the District Committee for redress." This was signed by some of the finest men in Methodism, such as Dr. Coke, Pawson, Adam Clarke, Richard Reece, Thomas Rankin, George Story, Walter Griffith, George Whitfield.

Yet it may be fairly questioned whether this was the most judicious mode of procedure in this painful and perilous affair. London was the

last place from which action should have been initiated, and London Preachers the last body of men. Besides, the document was too excited for such a grave and difficult matter. Nor did it instance the passages objected to. Worst of all, the signers went beyond their rights by suggesting the sentence which should be pronounced: "If Mr. Kilham continue among us after such gross and malicious assertions, we, to all intents and purposes, plead guilty." They should have foreseen that to deal with a man capable of publishing what Mr. Kilham had from time to time issued from the press "craves wary walking." They might have been quite sure that he would not hesitate to take the extremest advantage of any slip on their part.

The Chairman, of course, sent Mr. Kilham a copy of the requisition. This sacredly confidential Church-communication Mr. Kilham forthwith published to the world, under the heading *The London Methodistical Bull*, with a rude woodcut, representing a mad bull belching forth flame and smoke. This was surrounded by a deep black funereal border, and accompanied by forty-six pages of note and comment, in which he reiterated and emphasized the charges which he had publicly brought against his fathers and brethren, especially "priestcraft and popery" (p. 19). It also included a statement of a Methodist Minister's income, which was swelled to the utmost by reckoning as income the Superintendent's allowance for postage, and a Preacher's reimbursed travelling expenses in working his wide circuit (p. 18). This was avowedly done to make out the non-necessity of the fund voluntarily raised to supplement the scanty repayments of the Annuitant Society. It denounced the moderate provisions of this fund: "It is hardly possible to execrate them (these provisions) too much" (p. 22).

**What was the action of the Special District Meeting on the case?**

The special District Meeting held on Mr. Kilham's case found as follows:—

"We think Mr. Kilham wrong in ascribing the disposal of the lot to Satan, and think it a disparagement to that judicious body of men (the Conference) to say that it is 'an eternal reproach to Scripture, to reason, and to common sense.'

"It is the opinion of this meeting that the Conference extended the privilege of the Sacrament to as many Societies as existing circumstances would admit of, but think it cruel in Mr. Kilham in representing that that body of men acted as spiritual tyrants and sons of the great whore of Babylon.

"With regard to our mode of examining Preachers, we recollect to have heard our venerable father challenge the world from the pulpit to produce anything of

the kind equal to it; and therefore we cannot but think Mr. Kilham highly blamable in treating the subject laughably, as he has done.

"Mr. Kilham complains of want of economy and equity, and also of waste and secrecy in the disbursement of the public money, which heavy reflections fall with great weight upon the body of the Preachers in general, but most of all on those brethren who have the chief management of our affairs, whom we believe the people to have no just reason to suspect," etc.

Here Mr. Kilham's personal conduct, not his views, are dealt with.

The brethren deferred the sentence till the annual District Meeting, at which meeting they resolved: "We propose to Mr. Kilham, as his case is singular, to refer it to the Conference, on condition that we mutually bind ourselves not to print or publish anything until that time, lest it cause more division or uneasiness in our Circuits." "On my refusing," says Mr. Kilham, "to comply with these conditions, they thought proper to come to this conclusion: 'That they should now leave me to my own conscience, and to the determination of my brethren at the approaching Conference'" (Mr. Kilham's published *Journal*, pp. 100, 101, 112, 113). He gave the details of this trial to the world in a pamphlet, before Conference met.

### What course did the Conference take?

At the Conference of 1796, the charges lodged against Mr. Kilham came up in the regular course of business. The trial occupied three days. Mr. Kilham admitted his authorship of the pamphlets which contained these injurious attacks on the character of the brotherhood into which he had been admitted, and on the revered name of the founder of Methodism. He was asked whether he "intended to support" the condemnatory views of Methodism, its founder, and its administrators therein expressed. He demanded "time to consider." He was then asked whether, when, seven years before, Wesley had received him into full connexion, "he did not put into his hands a copy of the *Minutes of Conference*." He replied that he thought Mr. Wesley did. He was next asked: "Did you then promise to support and execute these *Minutes* and rules?" He could not deny that he had so promised. He was then asked: "Will you abide by that engagement, or do you retract it?" He again answered: "I desire time to consider this question." Time was accordingly allowed him; and the next day he presented a written document which was, in fact, a reiteration of his charges against his brethren and the Methodist system, and a demand for the abandonment of "the discipline" con-

tained in the *Large Minutes* of Conference, and of the principles which Wesley had embodied in the Deed of Declaration.

Thereupon the Conference solemnly reaffirmed its determination "to follow strictly the plan which Mr. Wesley left us, and to abide by the *Large Minutes* of the Conference in everything which respects both the doctrine and discipline contained therein."

This was carried unanimously, Mr. Kilham himself voting for both resolutions! When asked whether those votes did not involve a retraction of his accusatory and agitating publications, he replied that by engaging "to follow strictly the plan which Mr. Wesley left" he merely bound himself to follow it so far as he himself thought it Scriptural; and in avowing his determination "to abide by everything in the *Large Minutes*," he simply meant everything that he himself judged to be agreeable to Scripture. He was reminded that, with the selfsame reservation with regard to the Koran, he might as well be a Mohammedan Mufti as a Wesleyan Methodist Preacher, and that the very ground on which, on being received into full connexion, he had pledged his allegiance to Mr. Wesley's plan and the *Large Minutes*, was the conviction of its being "agreeable to the Scriptures."

Mr. Kilham was then charged with having published a series of unfounded and most injurious accusations against his fathers and brethren, those accusations being read seriatim from his published pamphlets. He was challenged to produce evidence in support of these public charges. He declined the onus of any attempt to produce the slightest evidence in support of those charges, taking the position that if the bare reiteration of those charges could not be taken as satisfactory evidence of their truth, he had "nothing more to say." His answers were either evasions or reaffirmations, except with regard to that which insinuated that "the moneys collected were foolishly and sinfully lavished away" and that in which he affirmed that "the Preachers have been guilty of 'downright swindling.'" He said that "by downright swindling he meant only want of economy"! The only instances of "want of economy" which he could produce were: 1. That of a Preacher whom he confessed that he knew to be suspended from his office at the time when the pamphlet was published. 2. That of a brother whose entire innocence of the charge was proved by the Steward of his Circuit, who wrote to the Conference a detailed statement of the exact facts of the case, showing that Mr. Kilham's accusation was the reverse of the truth. 3. That of a brother whom he charged with questionable conduct in regard to a horse. This

accusation was there and then fully disproved by unchallengeable witnesses. 4. The case of a brother who, as Mr. Kilham well knew, had been put back on trial. Mr. Kilham refusing to produce any further evidence in support of his sweeping charges, the Conference laid down the sound ethical principle: "That no person has a right to bring public charges against an individual or against a body of people unless he be ready, on proper occasion, to substantiate those charges."

Thereupon Mr. Kilham produced a private letter of which he had obtained possession in the following way. A Manchester Methodist picked up in the vestry of Salford Chapel a letter addressed to the Rev. Alexander Mather, Superintendent of the Circuit. Instead of at once restoring the letter to its owner, he opened and read it, and sent it to Mr. Kilham, who, in his turn, instead of forthwith passing it on to the venerable brother whose property it was, detained it for his own purposes, and now produced it in support of his charges. When asked what he thought of his conduct in this matter, he replied that "the letter had fallen providentially into his hands" (*Life of Rev. A. Kilham*, p. 276). The matters alluded to were thereupon thoroughly sifted, Mr. Kilham confessing himself to be perfectly satisfied "that the money in question was not at all embezzled."

As to one charge, he admitted that he had no basis whatever, namely, that which he had brought against Superintendents of recommending young men to the ministry "from mean and mercenary motives."

The utmost fairness was shown towards Mr. Kilham. It was decided: "That any letters sent in Mr. Kilham's favour should be read, but no letters against him."

At last the following resolution was unanimously agreed to: "Whereas Mr. Kilham has brought many charges against Mr. Wesley and the body of the Preachers of a slanderous and criminal nature, which charges he declared he could prove, and which upon examination he could not prove, even one of them; and also considering the disunion and strife he has occasioned in many of the Societies, we adjudge him unworthy of being a member of the Methodist Connexion."

Mr. Kilham himself "was ready to own that, according to its nature and tendency, the Conference treated him with respect; and that his examination was as fair as the inquisitorial character of such a court would admit" (*Life of Rev. A. Kilham*, pp. 279, 280).

**On what ground, then, was Mr. Kilham excluded from the Wesleyan Methodist Ministry?**

It will be at once seen that it was not for temperately and peacefully, though earnestly, ventilating his opinions with regard to desirable modifications or developments of, or additions to, the organization of Methodism, that Mr. Kilham was judged unworthy of a place amongst his brethren; it was as the assailant of the character of Wesley, and of that of his fathers and brethren in the pastorate, and as the persistent propagator of disturbance and disunion in the United Societies.

A week after his exclusion, Mr. Kilham addressed a letter to the President, in a tone so contrasted with that of his pamphlets and his replies to the Conference, that the brethren, in their yearning for peace and unity, interpreted it as a reflux of filial and fraternal feeling, and deputed seven of its most distinguished members to converse with him, and ascertain whether he could cordially work the Methodist system, abstaining from public attacks upon it and upon his brethren. He told them that he could no longer "sanction the Plan of Pacification." Whereupon the Conference changed exclusion into indefinite suspension, expressly leaving the door open for his return whenever he should be in a state of mind to peacefully discharge his duties as a Methodist Preacher, and abstain from agitating the Societies (*Life of Mr. Kilham*, and *Life of Rev. Alexander Kilham*).

**Was Mr. Kilham's exclusion from the Wesleyan Methodist ministry just and necessary?**

That he had committed the offences for which he was excluded, no one can affect to deny. That he had brought many charges against Mr. Wesley and the body of the Preachers "of a scandalous and criminal nature," the extracts we have given from his writings but too clearly prove. Wesley's name was still a charm and a power in the Methodist host. It was a mighty rallying cry and shout of onset. As the very name of Douglas won for the Scots the field of Otterburn against twice their number of the stoutest English, under their most gallant leader, though Douglas himself lay stretched and stiff upon the field, so the departed Wesley was still a potent presence among his people. An assault upon his memory touched the apple of their eye.

And the Methodist Preachers could in no wise afford to ignore the "many and grievous complaints laid against" them by one of their

own number. Their character was their working capital. He who filched their "good name" destroyed their usefulness.

That he had "occasioned disunion and strife in many of the Societies" was undeniable.

It was impossible for the brotherhood of Methodist Preachers to allow one of their number to set his fathers and brethren at defiance by maintaining the position and the attitude which Mr. Kilham had assumed. He had installed himself in a cynical censorship of the entire pastorate. In the name of "Liberty" he had usurped a democratic dictatorship in the Connexion. He had recorded in his *Journal*: "I would not any longer be restrained from printing anything whatever" (p. 113). He denied the jurisdiction of Conference in his own case, and demanded the creation of a new court to try his case, a court to be composed entirely of laymen, "one-half to be appointed by the Conference, and the other half by himself" (*Life of Rev. A. Kilham*, p. 265). In vain his adherents and admirers entreated him to deny himself of his offensive style of writing on Church-matters.

Mr. Kilham was the first Methodist Preacher who, for the accomplishment of Church-measures, availed himself of anonymous and pseudonymous attacks upon character, and the writing of letters of intimidation under feigned names.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE REGULATIONS OF 1797.—FURTHER DEVELOPMENT FROM 1797 TO 1805.

**What was the occasion and what the significance of the Regulations of 1797?**

Contemporaneously with the assembling of the Conference in Leeds in 1797, sixty-seven "Trustees' delegates" also assembled, in order to communicate with Conference as to still further adjustments of or additions to the machinery of Methodism. Mr. Kilham applied for admission to this Committee as delegate of the Hunslet trustees, but was refused, on the ground "that Mr. Kilham, being a Preacher under the censure of the Conference of Methodist Preachers, cannot with propriety be admitted to this meeting." The wording of this

resolution shows that the people regarded Mr. Kilham's exclusion as not definitive, but as terminable by his own act.

The Committee of Trustees' delegates began by recognizing the Conference as the source and centre of all authority in the Connexion. They submitted to Conference several questions. The first related to the "Bristol case." This was admirably settled by mutual concession of the two parties in the Bristol Society. The Trustees of the crowded new chapel took upon themselves the pecuniary liabilities of the two all-but-deserted old chapels, and a compromise was arrived at as to service in "Church hours." The second question was :—

"How far the preachers will agree that when the Conference shall make any new rule for the Societies at large, provided that the travelling Preachers find at the first quarterly meeting that the major part of that meeting, in conjunction with the Preachers, are of opinion that enforcing of such rule in that Circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that Circuit, it shall not be enforced in opposition to the judgment of a quarterly meeting until after a second Conference?"

The third was :—

"How far the Conference will agree to submit any new rule that they wish to make for the Connexion to the sanction of any meeting of Trustees, Stewards, etc., sent to places where the Conference shall be held in future?"

The Trustees of chapels had a specially strong claim to be heard, by reason of the sacrifices they were making, not of money only, but also of time and ease, and the responsibilities with which they were voluntarily burdened, and the indispensable services which they were rendering. The financial burdens and obligations which they had consented to bear gave substantial guarantees, both material and moral, for their fidelity to Methodism. They had, in fact, made themselves and their families to some extent hostages for Methodism. But, on the other hand, Trustees of chapels had given Wesley and the Conference more trouble than any other body of men, by claiming powers which belonged both in fact and of right to the Conference or to the Leaders' Meetings and Quarterly Meetings of the Societies.

It was absolutely necessary, alike in the interests of the people's rights and the responsibilities of their Pastors, to resist the unreasonable claim of the Trustees to exert a power of veto on the appointment of a Minister to a Circuit, a claim which put the building above the living Church and the Pastorate.

The Conference, wisely, did not recognize this Committee as a regular body of "Trustees' delegates," but simply as "members of the Society from various parts." Their request, in the form of

an enquiry, as to "new rules" was fully conceded. This was a very important popular arrangement, especially in its practical working. It made the Quarterly Meetings of the Connexion parties to all Conference legislation affecting "the Societies at large," suspending for one year the action of any rule objected to, and bringing it again under the consideration of Conference, in the event of any Quarterly Meeting having regarded its enforcement "as injurious to the prosperity of that Circuit." The Conference by this provision becomes aware of the views of the Quarterly Meetings throughout the Connexion with regard to any new regulation, each Quarterly Meeting being competent to take cognizance of, and express its views with regard to, every such new regulation; and, as a matter of fact, no new rule has ever been confirmed by a second Conference which was not assented to by the majority of the Quarterly Meetings of the Connexion—at once a most popular and a most conservative provision. The object of this regulation is thus expressed: "In order to prevent any degree of precipitation in making of new rules, and to obtain information of the sentiments of our people on every such rule, and the knowledge of the sentiments of the Connexion at large, through the medium of their public officers."

To the third question the reply of the Conference involved the refusal to regard a Committee of Trustees' delegates as a constitutional court in Methodism. It pointed to the Leaders' Meetings, Quarterly Meetings, and Trustees' Meetings as the regular local courts known to the Connexion, but declared lawful other meetings which had first received the approbation of the "Superintendent and the Leaders' Meeting or Quarterly Meeting, provided that the Superintendent, if he please, be present at every such meeting." It decided that "other formal meetings, in general, would be contrary to the Methodist economy, and very prejudicial in their consequences." It thus quietly signified to the Trustees the limits of their rights, as Trustees simply of the particular Connexional property of which they were the Trustees; and as not invested with any further Connexional responsibilities, and therefore not with any further Connexional rights. This was done by reaffirming and guaranteeing afresh the local powers of Trustees' Meetings; the privilege of electing delegates to meet in a Conference-town during the sessions of Conference being clearly not one of those rights.

The Trustees' delegates had the good sense and good feeling to cordially acquiesce in the decisions of the Conference. They voted:

"That the thanks of this meeting be unanimously given to the President and

members of the Conference for their **kind attention** to the business of the delegation of the Trustees that has been laid before them; and that it is their determination to support the Methodist cause on the plan agreed on at this Conference."

It would not be easy to devise a more effective and smoothly-working system of check and counterpoise than that of Wesleyan Methodism. The safeguards against hasty, undue, capricious, unequal, or light-headed law-making, secured by the power of the Quarterly Meetings on the one side, and of the Legal Conference on the other, are as perfect as could be well contrived. This arrangement secures the advantages without the disadvantages of three legislative chambers. On the one hand it guards against unpopular measures, and on the other it presents a breastwork against the attempt of any **knot** of popular leaders to accomplish, by adroit combination and determined audacity, and the perversion of Methodism to the purposes of political party or ecclesiastical revolution. It also ensures the looking at a question **all round**, and bringing to bear upon it a great variety of minds from diverse points of view. It guarantees the respective rights and liberties of Pastors and of people, and of majorities and minorities. It guards at the same time both Circuit and Connexional interests. The mutually restraining power of these three regulative factors is admirable. Deliberateness, whether in enacting or repealing, is thus secured, and unconstitutional proposals rendered useless.

The life-tenure in the case of the ex-Presidents of a place in the Legal Conference, and that of every other member till four years after his retirement from the work, and the fact that the Hundred form a **permanent** portion of the Conference, are provisions greatly favourable to considerateness and continuity of legislation, and of maintaining a series of well-thought-out and well-knit regulations. No important change can be sprung upon the Connexion. At least two years' discussion is secured, each measure is matured before it can be passed, and thus an Englishman's proverbially "better second thought" is obtained. Lieber rightly remarks that the "excluding **impassioned** legislation is a guarantee of liberty" (*Civ. Lib.*, p. 193). We thus maintain stability and continuity along with life and progress; and legislation is advanced with the minimum of risk and the maximum of gain. Each factor in the government of the body has the constitutional check upon the others which the great American statesman Madison showed to be "essential to a free government," whilst each is bound by "the organic law" of the Wesleyan Methodist constitution. Every bill has at least two readings.

Hence, the **Compendium of Regulations for the Methodist Societies**, appended to the **Rules of the Society**, in the **Class-Books**, by order of the Conference in 1864, had first been approved by nearly all the **Quarterly Meetings** in the **Connexion**. According to these regulations: "**Neither the Superintendent, nor any other Preacher, shall give tickets to any till they are recommended by a Leader.**" The **Form of Discipline** makes it incumbent on the Superintendent to hold "**Quarterly Meetings, and there diligently to enquire into both the temporal and spiritual state of the Societies.**" Thus a certain spiritual function is attached to the **Quarterly Meeting**: it is not strictly limited to temporal concerns.

Again, **The Form** prescribes: "**If there be any accusation against a Preacher, or any difficult affair to settle, not only the Circuit or Town Steward, but any Leader, or even member of the Society, shall be admitted as an evidence into a District Meeting, provided the matter has been first heard at the Quarterly Meeting.**"

The **Constitution of Quarterly Meetings** was not authoritatively defined till 1852.

The number of members in the **Junior Society Classes**, as well as in the **Adult Classes**, must be reported annually to the **Circuit Quarterly Meeting**; as also the statistics of the **Day and Sunday-schools**, in order to the careful consideration of the state of those schools. This gives to the **Quarterly Meeting** a constitutional cognizance of the state of the schools.

Conference cannot "**entertain memorials which involve a direct interference on the part of one Circuit with the local affairs or proceedings of any other Circuit.**"

In the event of there being no regular **Local Preachers' Meeting** in a **Circuit**, **Local Preachers** must be proposed and approved at the **Quarterly Meeting**.

"**Only such Lay Agents as may be recommended by the Quarterly Meeting of any Circuit**" can be employed in that **Circuit**. The transference of **Lay Agents** thus accredited from one **Circuit** to another must be in "**harmony with the Circuit Quarterly Meetings or the Circuit Home Missionary Committees**" (*Minutes*, 1879, p. 239).

In 1797 the delegates also requested the Conference to publish annually a statement of the receipts and disbursements on account of **Kingswood School**, the **Yearly Collection**, and the **Book Room**; and that a mixed committee of **Preachers** and delegates should examine the

accounts. They also requested the admission of lay-“ delegates from each District” to form a constituent part of the Conference.

The Conference at once agreed to the publication of the accounts of Kingswood and the Yearly Collection ; and accordingly in 1798 for the first time a schedule of receipts and disbursements appears in the printed *Minutes*. The Conference, however, rightly refused the inconsiderate and unbusiness-like demand that they should give to the public an annual statement of the accounts of the Book Establishment. They state clearly the reasons for their refusal ; reasons which could not and did not fail to satisfy men of business like the “ delegates.” These reasons are : 1. That the Wesleyan Methodist Book Establishment was neither created nor carried on by public contributions ; the relation between the Book Establishment and the public being simply that of providers on the one hand and purchasers on the other, the latter receiving money’s worth for whatever money they expended : and, therefore, an annual public overhauling of the accounts of the business must be intrusive, unwarrantable, and injurious. 2. That Mr. Wesley was the sole creator, and, to the date of his death, the sole proprietor of the Book Establishment ; taking on himself all the risks and responsibilities, and appointing and paying all the agents. 3. That the profits of the Book Room had been dispensed, according to Mr. Wesley’s judgment, especially in making provision for “ the wants of the Preachers and their families,” which were not met otherwise, owing to the inadequacy of the **Yearly Collection** to make up the deficiencies of Circuits in the payment of the small sum nominally allowed for the maintenance of the Ministers and their wives and children ; and also to the want of any sufficient Connexional provision for disabled Ministers or Ministers’ widows. 4. That Mr. Wesley had by a Deed of assignment, dated October 5th, 1790, made over this property of his own to the Conference, the profits to be devoted according to their judgment to the purposes to which they had been devoted during Mr. Wesley’s lifetime.

It is to be noted that whilst the Conference was steering the Connexion through such strong cross-currents of contending opinion—the high wind of Churchism being dead against the tossing tide of democratic theory—it was also called to put forth the utmost skill and vigilance in keeping clear of financial shallows. The generosity and childlike trust of Wesley had called into existence many interests which could not possibly be self-sustaining ; and now his great power of eliciting the liberality of others was lost to the Societies. The like embarrassments also resulted from the profuse beneficence and eager

missionary zeal of Dr. Coke, when he could no longer raise a revenue by personal appeal. Hence, for at least the first five-and-thirty years after Wesley's death, the Connexion was incessantly grinding against the reefs of financial shipwreck, and the Conference were often "at their wit's end." But "they cried unto the Lord in their distress, and He saved them out of all their fears." Yet not without an almost heroic self-denial on the part of the Preachers themselves.

The delegates were also too honourable and sensible to intermeddle with the **Preachers' Fund**; inasmuch as this fund was the **Preachers'** in a double sense, being a mutual benefit society, slightly subsidised by spontaneous generosity, formally recognised by the Conference in 1765 (*Minutes*, i., pp. 48, 49), to which "every Travelling Preacher" contributed an entrance fee, and an annual subscription, which formed a heavy percentage of his scanty "allowances." This was rendered necessary by the failure of the Societies to make any provision for disabled or worn-out Ministers and Ministers' widows.

In 1780, when Wesley found that the Circuits had left many Preachers' families unprovided for, and that every financial spring was exhausted, he made an appeal to the Preachers to loan to the Connexion the capital of their own private **Annuitant Society**, in the confidence that the fund would be recouped sooner or later by the justice and mercy of the people, to whom a touching Address was issued on that point. His appeal to the Preachers was very simple: "The men and their families cannot starve! I have no money. Here it is. We must use it. It is for the Lord's work" (*Minutes*, i., p. 335). This system went on for fourteen years, the Preachers' private Mutual Benefit Society supplying the deficiencies in the maintenance guaranteed by the Circuits. A Connexional appeal elicited a partial reimbursement of the sums thus diverted from their proper object. But in 1794 this give-and-take system was perforce brought to a close by the utter exhaustion of the capital of the **Preachers' Annuitant Society**. So after having pinched out of their pittance some thousands of pounds sterling to provide for their widows and for their own years of spent strength, they found the whole sum swallowed up in meeting the shortcoming of the Circuits in providing the small allowances which they had guaranteed when asking for a Preacher to live and labour among them.

Subsequently, a Connexional collection was made in aid of the Fund; and benevolent individuals occasionally made bequests or donations towards it, to increase the small amounts paid out of it to disabled

Ministers and Ministers' widows. On Wesley's death the little capital of the Annuitant Society was invested in the **Book Room**, and was soon exhausted by the manifold and incessant drain upon the proceeds of that establishment. The Book Room had become heavily indebted to the Preachers' Fund. It was not till 1799 that the Preachers' Fund was definitively protected, its real nature being indicated by a change of name to the **Annuitant Society**; afterwards altered into "the **Legalized Fund**"; whilst the contributions of the people were kept apart as the **Methodist Preachers' Merciful Fund**, the relation of which to the Annuitant Society was in 1813 suggested by a change of name into the **Auxiliary Fund**.

One rule, made the year before, which the delegates now asked Conference to explain, is curiously like a regulation in the earliest Church Book extant, *The Teaching of the Apostles*; namely, that "no Local Preacher shall be permitted to preach in any other Circuit than his own" without being accredited by his Superintendent. This by-law was found necessary in order "to prevent any, under the character of Local Preachers, from burdening the people, either by collecting money or by living upon them."

Two important prerogatives were conferred on the Leaders' Meetings—1. A veto on the admission into the Society of any individual whom they deemed improper. 2. Direct cognizance of, and a voice in regard to, every expulsion from the Society (*Minutes*, i., 377).

It was also decided that no Society officer could "be appointed without the consent of that meeting to which he particularly belongs."

An important regulation was also made with regard to admission to the Pastorate: "Before any Superintendent propose a Preacher to the Conference as proper to be admitted on trial, such Preacher must be approved of at the March Quarterly Meeting" (*Minutes*, i., 396). This made the approval of the Leaders, Local Preachers, and other officers of the Circuit to which he belonged indispensable to a man's admission into the Wesleyan Methodist Pastorate, giving them power to arrest, at the very threshold, any one whom they deemed unfit for the Ministerial office, either as to character or competence. This constituted the people the wardens of the narrow postern into the Pastorate.

After asserting the rights and functions of the various Church officers, the weighty injunction is added: "Let every one keep in his own place, and attend to the duties of his own station."

The Conference thus introduced a system of checks and safe-

guards against an oppressive and injurious exercise of Pastoral authority, by assigning to the local Quarterly Meetings, Leaders' Meetings, and Trustees' Meetings the effective powers above noted.

These were highly important advances towards that balance between the rights, powers, and functions of the Pastors and the people which is now so happily attained. The **Plan of Pacification** and the supplementary regulations of 1797 go far to constitute the **Bill of Rights** of "the people called Methodists." But Mr. Kilham's attempt to republicanize Methodism, by introducing universal suffrage into the Societies, and to divest the Pastorate of those rights without which its responsibilities cannot possibly be fulfilled, and at the same time to put the Class-leaders into leading-strings held by those whom they were appointed to lead; and to transform the great Pastoral Synod of Methodism into little more than a financial directorate—this the Conference would not yield to, and this the Connexion would not have.

The Conference of 1797 still further determined: "That all the rules which relate to the Societies, Leaders, Stewards, Local Preachers, Trustees, and Quarterly Meetings, shall be published with the Rules of the Society, for the benefit and convenience of all the members" (*Minutes*, i., 376). Thus, as Wesley's own life had been an **open book**, to be "read of all men," so there is in Methodism nothing esoteric.\*

The Conference retained the sole right to authorize a Connexional collection in all Methodist chapels. With the safeguards which had been provided, there was clearly nothing unscriptural or unpastoral in this, though the system which has since been gradually developed, till it culminated in 1876, embodies the true principle, in a much better form. The Apostle gave order for collections in the Churches which he had founded in Galatia, Corinth, Philippi, and, one would think, therefore elsewhere, and also instructed the various Churches to elect treasurers, trustees, or stewards whom he might put in charge of their contributions; just as the Twelve at Jerusalem directed the people to "look out men" whom they, the Apostles, might "appoint over the business" of dispensing the Church charities (Acts vi.). "Whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send" (1 Cor. xii. 1—3). The

\* It is noteworthy that at this Conference a special, though guarded, visitorial and consultative power was given to Alexander Mather (who was not President), which extended throughout the Connexion. Indeed functions were assigned to him which now belong to the President. This tentative episcopacy, not renewed the next year, was made in deference to Wesley's own wish.

Wesleyan Methodist financial system is in remarkable accordance with these Apostolic precedents.

And, as all Pastoral rights, functions, and responsibilities were preserved intact, so all popular rights, functions, and responsibilities are recognised in Methodism to a degree unsurpassed in any other Christian community since Apostolic times.

This same critical Conference of 1797 issued, under the name **A Form of Discipline**, a careful revision of the "Rules drawn up and left by Mr. Wesley, which were published by him in our *Large Minutes*, with a collection of those Rules which we believe to be essential to the existence of Methodism." This important document was, in the crucial judgments delivered in 1835, recognized as a "Code" by the Vice-Chancellor and the Lord Chancellor.

The wisdom and well-working of the Wesleyan Methodist Church polity, as reaffirmed and settled in 1797, is strongly set forth by a distinguished member of another Methodist community, in contrast with the unfortunate arrangements of the Church to which he belonged.

"All must admire his (Wesley's) foresight in the constitution of a Conference which should come into real legal operation at his death. Unhappily for the spread of the other (the Calvinistic) section of Methodists, it has gradually adopted a **Trustee-superintendence**; and this system, as far as the general extension of the cause is concerned, has **not worked well**. It has created a legal authority which may be opposed to the moral and ecclesiastical power; it has crippled the energies of Ministers, by making them feel that, excluded in a great degree from responsible management, they acted a subordinate part. It has paralysed talent" (*Life and Times of the Countess of Huntingdon*, Introduction to vol. ii.).

In the *Form of Discipline* "a Methodist Preacher" is distinctly regarded as "a Christian Minister." Under the heading, **The Office and Duty of a Methodist Preacher**, the first question is: "What is the office of a **Christian Minister**?" The answer is: "To watch over souls as he that must give account, to feed and guide the flock."

"The Chairman of each District is responsible to the Conference for the execution of our laws, so far as his District is concerned" (*Form of Discipline*). Then he must have the right of enquiry and direction to the extent necessary for discharging that responsibility.

The President has "power, when applied to by the Superintendent, to sanction any change of Preachers which it may be necessary to make in the intervals of Conference" (*Form of Discipline*).

The following significant direction was repeated :—“ As the Preachers are eminently one body, nothing should be done by any individual which would be prejudicial to the whole, or to any part thereof ” (*ibid.*).

The *Form of Discipline* also significantly repeats the direction to every Methodist Minister: “ **Act in all things not according to your own will, but as a son in the Gospel, and in union with your brethren.** ” The first great division in the Societies had been occasioned by the neglect of this rule on the part of one young Methodist Minister.

The *Form*, etc., also makes it an integral part of the duty of a Superintendent “ to take care that every Society be supplied with books.”

The utmost freedom of access to the ear of the Conference and the District Meetings was proclaimed: “ We will gladly receive intelligence, not only from our Quarterly and Leaders’ Meetings, but from any individual member of our Society, as well at the District Meeting as at the Conference.”

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### FORMATION OF THE METHODIST NEW CONNEXION.

**Was the Methodist New Connexion occasioned by the refusal of the people’s demands?**

That cannot be; for the administration of the Sacraments by Methodist Preachers in Methodist chapels was freely allowed wherever a majority of the Trustees, Leaders, and Stewards wished it. The difference in this respect between the Conference and Mr. Kilham was that he would have forced the Sacraments on Societies the majority of whose Trustees, Leaders, and Stewards objected. Mr. Kilham had been allowed to administer the Sacraments for years, and they were administered by him in Alnwick, his own Circuit town, and all the other places where they could be administered without disturbing or dividing the Societies.

**Had the popular changes which have subsequently been made**

been adopted in 1796, would the first considerable Methodist secession have been prevented?

If Mr. Kilham's views had been allowed to dominate, a far more exhausting drain of members must have been the result. Some of our best Societies would have been all but reabsorbed into the Established Church. Hull Methodism, which Richard Reece pronounced the finest Methodism in the world, would have almost disappeared, and with it that of Holderness, the chapels of which were in the hands of Hull Trustees, and a Society lost which has produced such men as Richard Waddy, Edward Hare, Thomas Galland, Alfred Barrett, and William Morley Punshon, besides many still living Ministers. The Methodism of Bradford and Macclesfield would have been reduced to a skeleton; Societies which have produced such men as Joseph Fowler. The first five Methodist members of Parliament would almost certainly have all been lost to Methodism: Butterworth of London; Thompson of Hull, the friend of Wilberforce; Saddler of Leeds, whose mother was the daughter of a clergyman, and who, as Shaftesbury acknowledged, was his great predecessor in philanthropic legislation; Andrew White of Sunderland, whose brother was a staunch Churchman, his nephew a clergyman, and his brother-in-law, Dr. Taft, an old-fashioned Methodist; and James Heald. Carmarthen would have gone, and its contingent to our ministerial ranks. The greater part of Irish Methodism would have been lost to Methodism. The great secession of Church Methodists there would not only have been anticipated by twenty years, but would have carried away a vastly greater number. Wesley himself, with Coke to help him, could never persuade the Dublin Trustees to allow the Sacraments to be administered in their chapels; and the Irish Conference put back on trial the saintly and scholarly Joseph Sutcliffe and another for having presumed to administer the Lord's Supper. (See Crookshank's *History of Irish Methodism*.)

In the *Jubilee Volume* of the Methodist New Connexion we read the following most candid account of the facts connected with the **Plan of Pacification**, which Mr. Kilham would not "sanction:"—

"We are prepared to make every allowance for the circumstances in reference to these decisions of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of 1795 respecting the Church and Sacramental questions. In fact, they demand our sympathy in some respects rather than our censure. They were beset with difficulties which were for the time insurmountable, and the probability is that a decision to administer the Sacraments and hold service in church hours in all the chapels, though accompanied with a declaration of liberty of conscience to all who dissented from such

a regulation, would at that time have created a fearful schism—a schism of perhaps more than one-half the community. This is evident from a fact in the history of the Connexion in Ireland; for when the Irish Conference, about twenty-five years afterwards, passed a resolution to have preaching in church hours, and to administer the Lord's Supper in their own chapels to such only as desired it, leaving all who dissented from this regulation at liberty to go to church as usual, there was a schism of about one-half, or somewhere about sixteen thousand persons, who formed a distinct community, under the denomination 'Primitive Wesleyans,' or 'Church Methodists.' The Conference was controlled by the force of circumstances rather than by its own wishes and desires" (pp. 107, 108).

Had Mr. Kilham's demands been assented to by Conference, our numerical loss would have been much nearer fifty thousand than five thousand.

Mr. Kilham might have rendered good service to Methodism by suggesting modifications and expansions of a system the history of which up to that moment had been that of a series of skilful modifications and of expansions carefully conceived and carefully carried out.

Neither Wesley nor the Conference had decreed the finality of the existing arrangements. The very first Conference had inaugurated most beneficial changes. But all the alterations made by Wesley or the Conference had been, not according to a programme or a theory, but according to providential indication and the emergent requirements of the ever-growing "work." The organizing and administrative genius of Wesley was essentially **English**: it was practical, pliant, and resourceful. And the polity adopted by the Conference had, in like manner, been eminently British. Its principles were identical with those announced by Lord John Russell in bringing in the Reform Bill of 1831: "It was desirable rather to build on the old foundations than to indulge our fancy or our conceit in choosing a new site and erecting on new soil—perhaps on sand—an edifice entirely different from all which had hitherto existed" (Heaton's *Three Reforms*, p. 59). Not so young Alexander Kilham. Notwithstanding the wonderful success, solidification, and harmony of Methodism, as worked on the devout, common-sense principles of its founder, this inexperienced professor of Church-organization would have built the Wesleyan Methodist Church on an inversion of the "old plan" and the old principles, on a "new site and new soil," on the shifting sand of theoretical democracy.

A most Christian resolution of the Conference the young preacher ostentatiously set at nought: "No person is to call another heretic, bigot, or any other disrespectful name on any account for a difference

in sentiment." This was called forth by the fact that "expressions have been used by some, through false zeal for their own peculiar sentiments, which are very unjustifiable" (*Minutes*, i., 260).

The state of the public mind rendered the injunction of the Conference that Methodist Ministers should abstain from disturbing speech and writing most opportune and necessary. The shock of that great political and social earthquake the French Revolution had not only convulsed the Continent, but had rocked the foundations of British society. Not only the infidel Thomas Paine and the Unitarian Priestley, but the Congregationalist Dr. Price, had proclaimed the principles of the French Revolution. This stormy state of things greatly aggravated the difficulties and dangers of the Connexion at the moment when it had lost its guiding head.

Mr. Kilham did incalculable disservice to the cause which he so injudiciously championed. The parts in his system which have since been adopted would have been accepted as soon as that could be done without violent disturbance and division. This is proved by the fact that the Nottingham District Meeting in 1796 passed the following resolution: "We see no reasonable objection to the admission of delegates from our Circuits to our District Meetings, nor of delegates from our Circuits into the Conference, to assist and advise with us on all matters which properly concern them as representatives of the people." This resolution was signed by every member of the meeting, beginning with the Ex-President, Thomas Hanby, and ending with the future President, George Morley, with but one dissentient, Samuel Bardsley, Bradburn's "lump of love," who expressed his doubts "whether it would work well." Thus the Nottingham District Meeting of 1796 anticipated the action of the Nottingham Conference of 1876.

Nevertheless, it is no slight proof of Mr. Kilham's sagacity and forethought that he anticipated so many of the successive modifications and expansions of the polity of Methodism which have been found necessary during the last ninety years, such as the strict preliminary theological examination of Local-preachers and the formation of a Local-preachers' Meeting; the strengthening of the lay element in Methodist administration.

In these points Kilham was before his time. But the question of the degree of rightness and reasonableness in some of Mr. Kilham's views is quite distinct from that of the timeliness and temper of the course which he pursued. Some of the questions

mooted by him were inevitable. The correlative rights and responsibilities of pastors and people had not yet been settled. Throughout the patriarchate of Wesley, Methodism had been a **mission** and a **movement**, a **revival** rather than a **reconstruction**. Moreover, it is only fair to note that the contest was begun by the Church-side of the Connexion. As Mr. Kilham says: "The signal-gun was fired from Hull." The precipitate issuing of the Hull manifesto was an ill-timed and injudicious act. It was sure to call forth some counterblast. But the Hull Methodists took this ill-judged and too eager step under earnest pressure from without.

When Wesley was urged to give to Methodism a Church-organization well defined, well balanced, and complete, he excused himself on two grounds: first, preoccupation with a higher and more urgent commission; and secondly, inadequacy to the task. Hence the people's part in Church matters was undetermined, rudimentary, provisional, and transitional. Mr. Kilham, however, was neither conscious of want of leisure nor of want of competence for this difficult work. Had he conducted himself with the modesty and deference for the judgment, information, and experience of others which would have so well become a man of his natural and ministerial juvenility, he might, doubtless, have risen to an influential position in Methodism.

On his exclusion Mr. Kilham forthwith devoted himself to a Connexional crusade, a propagandism of his own views of Church-government. The appliances of agitation were worked with the utmost energy. Myriads of missives, circulars, and pamphlets were scattered broadcast. Indignation meetings were called in many places. The twelve months between the Conference of 1796 and that of 1797 was to the Methodist Connexion a "day of trouble and rebuke." The cohesion of the United Societies was put to the sternest strain. And it marvellously stood the test. Violent contests took place for the possession of Methodist chapels as places of malcontent meeting (*Life of Mr. Kilham*, p. 127, etc.). Many Dissenters threw open their chapels to the man who was striving to Congregationalize John Wesley's Methodism to a great extent. He set **up** a periodical, called the *Monitor*, for the dissemination of his **views**. The public mind was at the time in a most excited state, English society being honey-combed with revolutionary clubs. Methodist politics in many places formed a subsection of secular politics.

The earliest report of the number of **members** in the "New Methodist

Connexion," as the new body fittingly termed itself, was given at its first Conference, in 1798. The total was 5,037. Five itinerant "Preachers" joined Mr. Kilham. This was the extent of the secession after such prolonged and ardent agitation.

In their *Life of Mr. Kilham*, "the President and Secretary of the New Methodist Connexion Conference" feel bound to make the following admissions with regard to him :—

"He was certainly in many respects too precipitate, and acted with too great a degree of promptness, from his own views, without properly considering what judgment others might form of the same subject. He supposed that every one would adopt his ideas, and did not make proper allowance for the sentiments of others. He became bewildered in the multiplicity and inaccuracy of his writings. Some of his complaints had the appearance of personal abuse, others as if produced only for the purpose of defamation ; some of his individual charges were not properly supported ; and in some cases general conclusions were made from particular premises, which is certainly a false and unfair mode of reasoning" (pp. 181, 182). \*

Mr. Kilham found the work of reconstruction much more difficult than that of agitation. Moreover, he found himself confronted with a veritable despotism—that of local lay-lords of God's heritage. Such is the testimony of an eminent New Connexion Minister : "Some of those who were active and noisy in the division neither understood nor respected the principles of Scriptural freedom, but, loving to have the pre-eminence, became lay-tyrants in their several localities. Hence Societies were disquieted and weakened, and some true-hearted friends, wearied with strife and longing for repose, left the Connexion in disappointment and sorrow. . . Here and there, in the early years

\* Yet these good men forthwith give Mr. Kilham's style the flattery of their imitation. For example : "The Methodistical government, from the very nature of its formation, as naturally leads to a corrupt ministry, as that the sun shall produce heat, its absence cold, or any other cause produce its natural effects." They also assert that "what might be expected from such a government is fully established by recent facts."

Of these proofs of "a corrupt ministry," only three are instanced. The first of these is the resistance of the Conference to the endeavour of certain Trustees of chapels to wrest from the Conference the right of appointing Preachers, with which the Deed of Declaration had invested that body. This is described as "the attempt to seize on half a million of landed property"! The second is the defeating of Dr. Whitehead's endeavour to make money of Mr. Wesley's papers in defiance of the co-executors. The third is the idea entertained by a few leading Preachers that the system which had worked so well in republican America might not prove unsuitable in monarchical England (p. 116). It is pleasant,

of the New Connexion, individuals, and even Societies, manifested a qualified respect for Ministers, insubordination to constitutional authority, and a want of that mutual forbearance which is essential to the peaceful order and spiritual growth of a Church" (The Rev. S. Hulme's *Life of Rev. Thomas Allin*, pp. 22, 23).

Mr. Kilham died at the age of thirty-six, worn out by excitement and exertion, having survived his breach with Wesleyan Methodism little more than two years.

The *Jubilee Volume* of the Methodist New Connexion distinctly declares "Mr. Kilham was not the founder of the Connexion" (p. 56). Mr. Thom must in all fairness be regarded as the real founder of the Methodist New Connexion. He was elected as its first President, Mr. Kilham being yet alive, and he was five times subsequently raised to the same office. A native of Aberdeen, his views and habits of thought with regard to Church polity were of the Scottish type.

It would be a grave mistake to suppose that the formation of the Methodist New Connexion is a matter for unmixed regret. The mode in which it originated is greatly to be deplored, and an unnecessary denomination is to be devoutly deprecated. But brotherly secession is far less schismatic than unbrotherly contention and angry non-acquiescence in the judgment of the majority. In many respects the Wesleyan Methodist system strikingly resembles the physical constitution of its human founder. It is compact, wiry, buoyant, capable of an indefinite amount of work, movement, exposure, and endurance of hardness. And as Wesley attributed his healthy, cheerful, active longevity, not only to his regular habits, his hard work, and itinerant

however, to add that the later *Life of Mr. Kilham*, published at the Methodist New Connexion Book Room, takes a totally opposite view of the so-called "attempt to seize on half a million of landed property." It is there shown that when "the New Connexion Trustees" of "Nottingham, Huddersfield, Brighouse, and perhaps a few other places," took possession of chapels, which the Conference, by legal process, recovered to the Old Connexion, "there can be no question, on an impartial consideration of all the circumstances," that the Conference was in the right, and the New Connexion Trustees and Preachers were in the wrong, "If it were allowed that a place of worship, after it has been regularly settled, and certain interests therein, whether relating to the pulpit or any other matter vested in different parties by a trust deed, may be so changed in its use as to exclude any one from the privileges originally secured to it, there would be an end of all confidence, and those engaged in erecting chapels would not know to what party or purposes they might in course of time be appropriated" (pp. 368, 369).

outdoor life, but also to the critical illnesses which again and again threatened speedy dissolution, which, however, only carried off disturbing and therefore enfeebling matter, so doubtless the threatening crises through which Wesleyan Methodism has been called to pass have been, through the Divine goodness, **a lengthening of its tranquillity.**

Meanwhile a new experiment in Church-structure has been tried ; a home has been provided for those Methodists who had strong opinions and preferences in favour of the system adopted by the New Connexion ; an interesting variety of the genus **Methodist** has been produced and cultivated. The New Connexion has raised some fine men, such as Thomas Allin, a most effective pulpit orator, and an able writer ; Dr. William Cooke, catholic-spirited, literary, "valiant for the truth upon the earth ;" Samuel Hulme, a scholar and a gentleman, of whom the town in which he has so long resided is so justly proud ; Dr. Stacey, a Preacher and writer whose vigorous and subtle intellect, always under the control of sobriety and reverence, would adorn any Church in Christendom ; Dr. Cocker, and many another honoured name, too numerous to mention : and amongst the laity many beautiful characters and lovely Christian households. The Methodist New Connexion has been, and still is, an efficient factor in the religious life of England, and has accomplished sound evangelistic and educational work. The first Fernley Lecture was delivered by Dr. Osborn in the noble New Connexion chapel at Hanley ; Dr. Cooke and Dr. Stacey have preached and spoken on our great missionary occasions, and enriched our Magazine by their thoughtful contributions. Richard Watson always wrote with respect of the New Connexion, which he neither joined nor left on theoretic grounds, and earnestly advised all Methodists to join them whose views of Church-government were more in accordance with theirs than ours.

The second Conference of the Methodist New Connexion found itself compelled to record the following severe, though implicit, condemnation of Mr. Kilham's policy :—

"Q. Shall the Conference be deterred from following the convictions of their own minds by any verbal or written threatenings either from individuals or from any number of persons ?

"A. Should this be admitted, our liberty is at an end. Anything that wears the aspect of compulsion ought to be rejected" (*Life of Rev. A. Kilham*, Methodist New Connexion Book Room).

"Written threatenings" had been amongst Mr. Kilham's favourite

weapons. If his intimidation in the name of "Liberty" had been submitted to, "liberty" would have been "at an end."

**Is there a substantial resemblance between the branches of the great Methodist family?**

There is a real family likeness, and there are marked family mannerisms, amongst the various branches of the Methodist household. The New Connexion, like the Old, has enriched the religious biography of the present century, amongst the gems of which we may instance the *Memoirs of James Parry*, by Richard Watson. It is also to be congratulated on and imitated in its firm fidelity to the truth of the Gospel, as shown in its exclusion of popular Ministers who have erred from the faith.

There is, however, this marked and admitted contrast between the origin of the Old Connexion and that of the New. The *Jubilee Volume* of the latter rightly says of "the new itinerancy:" "The constitution was a theory" (p. 391). The perils inherent in the system are also freely confessed: "It must not be concealed that our free constitution is very liable to be perverted to licentious purposes. Some love to have the pre-eminence; others, impatient of the restraint which legitimate government imposes, are ever litigious and restless. Some, confounding freedom with equality, would abolish all official distinctions in the Church, not regarding the injunction of the Apostle: 'We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.' Mistaken views as to the nature and end of Church-government have led to serious failures in many hopeful enterprises" (*ibid.*).

The *Jubilee Volume* gives an earnest, timely testimony to the vital usefulness of the class-meeting. It also makes a solemn protest against the neglect of baptized children by the Church which, having received them into the fold, has committed itself to take care of them and train them, and draws attention to the necessity of "special and systematic attention to young men," with a view to preparing them "to fulfil the offices of our Church"—as Class-leaders, Local-preachers, etc.

At the Conference of 1887, the number of members in the Methodist New Connexion, including those on trial, was reported as 32,190.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

STATE OF WESLEYAN METHODISM AT THE CLOSE OF THE LAST AND THE BEGINNING OF THE PRESENT CENTURY.—FURTHER ECONOMICAL DEVELOPMENT.—QUICKENING INFLUENCE ON THE CLERGY.—FIRST EXPULSION FOR HERESY.—ASSAULTS FROM WITHOUT.

**What was the state of Wesleyan Methodism at the close of the century ?**

The twofold attempt to compel Wesleyan Methodism to break with and break from the principles of its God-owned Founder and the grand first half-century of its career, and to cramp its pliant and expansive framework within the formulæ of a crude theory of Church-government, was defeated by the refusal of the Conference to resolve itself into a constituent assembly of constitution-makers, and its determination to leave itself free to carry out, under the guidance of the Spirit and providence of God, the glorious task which its previous history had set before it. That Wesleyan Methodism saw clearly what that task was is plainly shown by the following significant question and answer in the *Form of Discipline* issued by the Conference of 1797. The immediate object was to distinguish between "essential" and "prudential rules."

Q. "In what view may the Methodist Preachers be considered ?"

A. "As messengers sent by the Lord, out of the common way; to provoke the regular clergy to jealousy, and to supply their lack of service towards those who are perishing for want of knowledge; and, above all, to reform the nation by spreading Scriptural holiness over the land."

Here the real meaning and mission of Methodism are clearly set forth. We have: 1. Its freshness and urgency, its new apostolicity and direct Divine authority: "Messengers sent by the Lord." 2. Its extraordinary and exceptional nature: "out of the common way." 3. Its provocative object and effect: "To provoke the regular clergy to jealousy." This design has been most remarkably and admittedly accomplished, in both the good and the bad, the Scriptural and the unscriptural, the classic and the conventional, sense of the word "provoke." 4. "The Methodist Preachers" are recognized as "clergy," none the less so because "irregular." This is plainly implied in the word "regular" applied to the other clergy, which without

this implied distinction and contrast would be superfluous. 5. The justification of this irregular Methodist ministry on the ground of its crying necessity: "to supply their lack of service towards those who are perishing for want of knowledge." The urgency of the case was felt to be such that for even a Samaritan to pass by on the other side would have been inhuman. How much worse then the bitter opposition of "the regular clergy" to a work which their neglect had imposed on others! 6. The supplementary nature of the work: "to supply their lack of service." 7. The national scope and sweep of the Methodist mission: "to reform the nation by spreading Scriptural holiness over the land." "God thrust them out utterly against their will, to raise a holy people."

**Was not Wesleyan Methodism exhausted by the agitation and the secession of the Methodist New Connexion?**

No. It is a signal proof of the vitality and recuperative power of Wesleyan Methodism that the paroxysms which it has endured have not produced exhaustion or paralysis. On the contrary, each successive convulsion has been followed by renewal of energy and enterprise. Of course there has been depletion, especially of Class-leaders. But there has never been syncope or suspension of activity. *A Review of the Character and Conduct of the Late Mr. Kilham*, published in February, 1800, under the authority of Mr. Thom, admits: "The Old Connexion, with respect to numbers, is in a more flourishing condition than it has ever been in at any former period." The seceders not only "worthy proved to see" the old body "in full prosperity," but they also carried with them the same Christian conviction, experience, and living fellowship. And so as to every successive secession. Hence all the secessions from Wesleyan Methodism have manifested a marvellous faculty for and facility in extemporising their new organization and forthwith resuming the grand work of reciprocal edification and vigorous evangelization, on their own account. As Mr. Hulme beautifully observes in the *Jubilee Volume* of the New Connexion, the various branches of the Methodist family "do all eat the same spiritual meat and all drink the same spiritual drink." Those who ceased to be Wesleyan in Church-theory and Church-experiment did not cease to be Wesleyan in doctrine and experience. It was this unison of teaching, the vital, practical, intense godliness of its Bensons and its Thoms, of its Mary Fletchers and Hannah Kilhams, of its Butterworths and Ridgways, which saved it

in both its sections. On one point only besides his doctrine of the Pastorate did Mr. Kilham himself deflect from the theological orbit of "the old body:" "his leaning to the notion of a universal restoration" (*Life of Rev. A. Kilham*).

All this time the Connexion carried on vigorously its missions in the West Indies and British America. It began missions in France and Western Africa, produced and circulated sound and savoury literature, and defended against all assailants "the truth of God" and its own mission. In the year 1800 Dr. Coke initiated a genuine **Welsh** mission in his native principality.

The rapid increase of the home work occasioned severe financial embarrassments. The average increase from 1797 to 1805 was more than four thousand a year, so little sign of spiritual shrinkage was there. In 1802 the first of a series of great Connexional efforts was made in response to an appeal of Conference, and the Connexional Funds were cleared of debt.

### **Who were permitted to take the Lord's Supper in Wesleyan Methodist chapels?**

On giving permission for the administration of the Lord's Supper in our chapels, due care was taken to **fence the tables**, the rule being passed: "No person shall be suffered on any pretence to receive the Lord's Supper among us unless he be a member of our Society, or receive a note of admission from the Assistant, which note must be renewed quarterly."

### **Was any attempt made to connect Wesleyan Methodism more closely with the Established Church?**

In 1798 Dr. Coke formed a plan for the recognition of Wesleyan Methodism by the Established Church, and for its organic attachment to that Church, which he submitted to the Attorney-General and the Bishop of London, who laid it before the Archbishops. The Primate, after a fortnight's consideration, declared the "plan to be both impracticable and highly unjustifiable." After this repulse Dr. Coke kept his own counsel, and Conference heard nothing of the matter. Thus this tentative overture for the unification of Wesleyan Methodism with the Establishment, and for the dependence, in some degree, of the former on the latter, was rejected by the highest Church authority on the ground of both the unworkableness of the suggested plan and

of the implied reflection on the clergy and admission of the want of effective discipline in the Established Church. Methodism was thus emphatically told that it must be its own authorization, and see to its own complete Church-equipment, or else cease to be. Yet the Methodist pastorate was incessantly assailed by the clergy as destitute of the very legitimation which the episcopate refused to confer. Nevertheless, whilst defending itself against clerical misrepresentation and contempt, it did not "render railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing," and pursued the toilsome and benignant "tenor of its way." These facts constitute not a refutation only, but a reversal, of the sentence so persistently pronounced by Anglican writers against the Methodist pastorate—of precipitating the inevitable detachment of the Methodist Societies from their partial dependence on the Established Church.

The truth is, the Established Church was quite conscious that it possessed no assimilating power whereby Methodism might become vitally connected with itself.

### **But did not the leaven of Methodism spread in the Established Church?**

By the close of the century the leavening and quickening effect of Methodism on the clergy was quite apparent.

"In 1799 we have the report of the meeting of a number of clergy in one district in Lincolnshire, convened, with the approbation of their bishop, 'for the purpose of considering the state of religion in the several parishes in the said district, as well as the best mode of promoting the belief and practice of it. To a student of religion in the eighteenth century, there is a distinct air of novelty in it' (*Abbey's English Church*, ii., 149). Mr. Abbey admits that the Methodist revival "inspired thoughts of progress and a determination not to rest stupidly satisfied with forms that had become hurtful or effete, but to improve and reform the old, and adapt it to new conditions. So far, in Church-questions as well as in social and political ones, it was good" (ii., 158). Mr. Abbey describes the highly respected Bishop Newton, author of the celebrated book on the Prophecies, as "a worthy of that easy, satisfied, indulgent type which can only flourish when a Church is in that **relaxed and somnolent, yet secure and respectable**, condition which was then generally prevalent, that dull and torpid circulation in the body ecclesiastic. Place-seeking and preferment-hunting conveyed amongst the most part no sort of censure" (ii., 237).

### What further development took place in the Wesleyan Methodist economy ?

In 1802 it was decided that every candidate for probation for the Methodist pastorate should not only pass the District Meeting, but should undergo "an examination before all the brethren, respecting his experience, his reading, his views of the doctrines of the Gospel, and his regard for Methodism in general." The examination was not necessarily to be conducted by the Chairman of the District, but by the brother whom the majority thought the most capable man for the work (*Minutes*, ii., 142).

In 1803 it was found necessary to form another Connexional committee: the **Committee of Privileges**. Wesleyan Methodism has hitherto been the most unpolitical of all religious communities of equal numerical strength. This has been to it a strong safeguard as well as an honourable distinction. Nevertheless, such a numerous and wide-spread body could not but have one or other of its manifold interests sometimes menaced, either designedly or inconsiderately. In the year 1802, when this kingdom was threatened with invasion, an Act was passed by the British legislature empowering His Majesty to call out the regular military and corps of supplementary militia to practise the martial exercise on the Lord's day. Through the influence of some highly respected members of our Society and some of the Preachers then stationed in London, a clause was introduced into the Act exempting from duty on the Sabbath those persons who conscientiously regarded it as a violation of the law of God (*Myles' Chron. Hist. of the Meth.*, p. 296). The mind of Conference was thus directed to the necessity of vigilantly guarding the religious interests of the body and those of its individual members. The question was asked: "How may we guard our religious privileges in these critical times?" The answer was the appointment of a small committee of Preachers and Laymen (including the two Methodist members of Parliament), "to be annually elected by the Conference." The committee was to be consulted before any lawsuit was commenced relating to Methodist property (*Minutes*, ii., 184). This committee has subsequently been greatly enlarged. In 1811 it did effective service in opposition to Lord Sidmouth's intolerant Bill, and in securing the amended Toleration Act; with regard to the Factory Education Bill; the Dissenters' Chapels Bill in 1844, the Maynooth Endowment Bill in 1845, the Charitable Trusts Bill in 1846, the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill in 1851, and the Dissenters' Burials Bill in 1880. It has always

been on the alert with regard to cases of clerical persecution in the rural districts. In 1843 an acting sub-committee, the **Committee of Exigency**, was appointed, and has been reappointed each successive year.

The committee has always claimed its right to consider, and, if expedient, to take action with regard to, any parliamentary measure strongly affecting the cause of God, of morals, of humanity, and of Protestantism in the United Kingdom, though with great caution and discretion.

The committee has thus most beneficially extended its views beyond strictly Connexional affairs, and has made its voice heard and its influence felt on matters seriously affecting true religion in the United Kingdom and the empire.

### **Did the Connexion maintain its doctrinal purity after Wesley's death?**

In 1806 occurred the first dismissal of a Preacher for doctrinal error. Joseph Cooke had been charged at the Conference of 1805 with preaching seriously erroneous opinions on the vital doctrines of the nature of saving faith and the witness of the Spirit. The treatment of his case was in accordance with the combined gentleness and firmness which have always characterized the exercise of Methodist discipline on theological aberrations. Mr. Cooke was required to give earnest consideration to these truths during the next twelve months, and meanwhile to abstain from troubling our Societies and congregations with his peculiar speculations. This he explicitly engaged to do. Nevertheless a few months afterwards he published two sermons on **Justification by Faith and the Witness of the Spirit**, addressed to "the members of the Methodist Society," in which he explained away alike justifying faith and the direct witness of the Spirit.

The morale of this act was on a par with the exegesis of his sermons. It was, of course, absolutely necessary to protect our people from being taught in Wesleyan Methodist pulpits doctrines the very reverse of those embodied in our standards and our hymns, as well as in the Scriptures.

### **Did Wesleyan Methodism still pursue its evangelistic mission?**

In 1806 the first definite plan for Wesleyan Home Missions was adopted by the Conference. Eight vigorous home missionaries were stationed in as many spiritually destitute parts of the country which were still outside our circuit system. Methodism was thus prevented

from merely cultivating its old intakes, and sent forth labourers to break up new ground.

Yet, whilst so intent upon its own mission, Methodism took a share in the general evangelistic and philanthropic work of the Churches. At the beginning of his anti-slavery career, Wilberforce, before his own conversion, had received Charles Wesley's strangely prophetic benediction. Wilberforce instinctively applied to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference for countenance and co-operation, which were most heartily accorded. The Conference of 1807 decided that no one of its West Indian missionaries should be allowed to marry "any person" who "may be possessed of" slaves, and those brethren who had already by marriage become possessed of slaves were required "to take immediate and effectual steps for their emancipation."

In 1804 the Bible Society was formed, and Christopher Sundius, a London Methodist, was a member of its first committee, to which Joseph Butterworth, M.P., and Adam Clarke were soon added. Dr. Clarke proved one of its most effective members. He constructed a scale of types, of wonderful neatness and finish, for a Tartar New Testament, a work for which he resolutely declined any remuneration. In 1807 he was allowed to stay a third year in London, against the usage of the time, on the earnest representation of the Bible Society that his assistance was "indispensably necessary for furnishing various heathen and Mohammedan nations with the Holy Scriptures in their respective languages."

By the Conference of 1808 a very important step was taken—the sending for the consideration of all the Districts a scheme for the promotion of a **Fund for Chapels** which had been recommended to Conference by the London District. This bore fruit nine years afterwards (1817) in the appointment of a **Chapel Committee**, to guard against the improvident multiplication of chapels, and in the institution, in 1818, of the **General Chapel Fund** for the relief of overburdened trusts. The old Chapel Committee is now in part superseded by District Chapel Sub-Committees, whilst the **General Chapel Committee** in Manchester now conducts our chapel affairs on firm, broad principles and with admirable effect.

### **Did the hostility of the clergy towards Methodism soften ?**

Notwithstanding all this benevolent activity, the easy-going Church of Englandism wrought itself into enthusiasm on one question only—the spread of Methodism. This was the kindling theme of Visitation Sermons and Bampton Lectures, and at length the *Edinburgh* and the

*Quarterly Reviews* attacked Methodism as “lunacy” and “one general conspiracy against common-sense and orthodox Christianity;” and because Methodism vitalized the orthodoxy of the Established Church, and insisted that Christianity must become once more, and more than ever, a powerful factor in individual and national life, a fact and a force which **had to do** with everything, and with which everybody (even clergymen themselves) **had to do**, and because it maintained that articles of belief are truths to be realized as well as words to be rehearsed; and strove its utmost to evoke, alike in stolid clodhopper and self-complacent church-goer, the conviction that the “God Almighty” of the Creeds and Liturgy takes an intense interest in men, women, and children, and that He has claims upon them, which He will not lightly forego—for this cause its hand was thought to be against every man, and therefore every man’s hand was against it. Its existence was declared by a leading Review to indicate “an excess of religious toleration.”

Meanwhile Methodism held on its way, conscious of its own meaning and intent upon its own mission: “to spread Scriptural holiness throughout the land,” and throughout the world; to enjoy, to exemplify, to extend, true Christianity, and to witness to a present, free, and full salvation. This idea underlies all its arrangements, and is the law of its life. There were, indeed, Methodists who had but a faint and fitful apprehension of the fact, but for the most part they knew that “a dispensation of the Gospel” was “committed unto” them—a Divine message and errand entrusted to them. They also believed that, if faithful to its calling, Methodism had a blessed future to anticipate. This was its regulative and animating principle. Adherence to this justified its existence, and rendered it intelligible, and constituted its identity from generation to generation. Out of this idea its institutions grew.

Nevertheless it was still obliged to defend itself against assailants, “by pureness, by **knowledge**, by the **armour** of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left.” It was fiercely attacked, on the one side by Unitarian republicanism, and on the other by Episcopalian intolerance.

The alarm of literary Churchmen at the rapid growth of Methodism and of other Nonconformist communities, and the extent to which their activity and liberality were leaving the Established Church behind, soon communicated itself to several statesmen. In 1809 Viscount Sidmouth, under cover of protecting the public service against unfair exemptions, moved for a return of the number of “preaching

licences" which had been issued from the year 1780 to the year 1808. Although the hostile purpose of the motion in relation to Nonconformity was divined and rebuked by Lord Harrowby, the returns were ordered, as also of the number of chapels licensed during the same period. The archbishops and bishops also presented returns of the number of the churches and chapels belonging to the Establishment consecrated during the same period in every parish containing a thousand inhabitants and upwards. It was found that the Establishment was in a humiliating minority. In 1814 Lord Sidmouth brought into the House of Lords "a Bill to explain and render more effectual the Acts of the first of William and Mary and the nineteenth of George I. so far as relates to Dissenting Ministers." The Bill would not have much affected **Dissenting Ministers**: it touched principally **Methodist Local-preachers**, but affected all strictly lay evangelical agency, which it would have sorely hampered, and to a great extent prevented. The petitioning against the Bill was so prompt and overwhelming, and the speeches against it of several noblemen and of the Primate himself (Manners Sutton) were so well reasoned, that the Bill was lost. But the enemies of religious liberty were not dead. Several judges put a new construction on the Act of Toleration, making it refer only to Ministers of single congregations; thus excluding from its protection all Methodist Preachers, whether local or itinerant. Thereupon the Committee of Privileges applied directly to the Prime Minister (Mr. Percival), and on Mr. Percival's assassination to Lord Liverpool, his successor; and an Act of Parliament was secured repealing the Five Mile Act, the Conventicle Acts, and other relics of the intolerance of the Restoration times. The **Protestant Association for the Protection of Religious Liberty**, which had been founded by two hundred Dissenting congregations in reply to Lord Sidmouth's Bill, also contributed to this memorable result. The comparative statistics of Methodism and Dissent on the one hand and of the Established Church on the other had a deterrent effect on repressive measures.

The Manchester District Meeting also drew up a powerful protest, well worded and admirably reasoned, against this attempt first to isolate Methodism, and then to crush it (Bunting's *Life of Bunting*, p. 371, etc.).

It will be seen that the leading Methodist minds had difficulties to deal with, internal and external, administrative, economic, and political, which required and evoked no small wisdom and nerve.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE SECOND AND THIRD METHODIST OFFSHOOTS—FORMATION OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

**What occasioned the second Methodist offshoot?**

The second Methodist secession occurred in 1810. For some years the leading minds of Methodism had seen with alarm a tendency to what they regarded as extravagance in the conduct, or rather the **want** of conduct, of revival services. Early in the century a resolution was passed requiring the Preachers to check these *escapades* of religious excitement. The endeavour to do this in some Circuits rather aroused insubordination than restrained irregularity. During this state of things, the first American revivalist commenced operations in England. This was a most peculiar personage named Lorenzo Dow, who had been a Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He manifested what seemed an almost preternatural penetration into rude and rustic human nature; and he gave play to a broad, audacious, plebeian humour, and to sarcasm at once grave and grim. He was of unflinching and sometimes brilliant resource in all the emergencies of aggressive out-door evangelism. He was not altogether uneducated, and was well versed in Scripture, "rude in speech but not in knowledge," and an intense Arminian. In 1807, hearing of a revival in the Staffordshire Potteries, he betook himself thither. Shortly before he left America, camp-meetings had been resorted to as a means of gathering the scattered backwoods population to religious services, and had been attended with great success. This expedient Dow recommended to the devoted Local-preacher who was the leader of aggressive evangelism in that district. A flag was hoisted on Mow Cop, the most prominent mountain in the region, and people gathered in great numbers from all the country round. Mr. Hugh Bourne had incidentally preached out of doors six years before on the same spot, "because there was not room for" the people "in the house."

The novelty of the procedure alarmed many staid and steady-going Methodists. Hugh Bourne defended it through the press, and was replied to by "the Preachers" in the Burslem and Macclesfield Circuits. The most powerful part of Bourne's defence is the description of the first meeting. Extravagances, it was said, "excesses," whatever might be indicated by that word, discredited these gatherings. The Conference of 1807 "disclaimed connection with them," as "likely to be productive of considerable mischief." The erratic American, who

was neither accredited by nor amenable to any Church whatever, communicated his own spirit of self-superintendence to the leaders of the movement. They refused to be regulated by either the Superintendent or any Church-meeting whatever. Mr. Bourne itinerated widely, getting up camp-meetings whenever he could. As he definitely rejected the authority of the Leaders' and Local-preachers' meetings, they, not unnaturally or ungraciously, felt driven to disown all responsibility for his acts. Thereupon he published Lorenzo Dow's *Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs* and devoted himself to Open-air Missions, **advising all his converts to join the Methodist Society.** But soon the breach became decisive, and a Class was formed of the converts of Mr. Bourne and his fellow-helpers who were not, and had never been, connected with any Christian community. A separate plan of preaching-places and preachers was issued. The next year quarterly tickets were printed, and in 1812 the new body assumed the name of the **Primitive Methodist Connexion.** In 1818 a Deed Poll was drawn up, and a new religious denomination definitively founded. A *Primitive Methodist Magazine* and a *Primitive Methodist Hymn-book* were published. Thus irregularity found itself obliged to regulate itself.

The fact that the "Primitive Methodist" movement was at first entirely in the hands of laymen is impressed upon the constitution of the Body. The pastors are, in theory at least, much less the rulers than the ruled.

One lesson of this secession is that the **Revivalist**, a functionary without an office or special limited local charge, must be recognised in Methodism as he was in the early Church, as shown by the *Teaching of the Apostles*, and must also be amenable to Church authority, though held with a rather loose rein. The **Evangelist** was a recognized functionary in the early Church (Acts xxi. 8). The *Teaching of the Apostles* also shows that there were "prophets and teachers" for the Church at large, as well as presbyters for particular Churches. The Waldenses also had a class of itinerating evangelists.

In all consistency the revival element and that of aggressive, adventurous, and adaptive evangelism must always be recognised and honoured in Wesleyan Methodism as the very force to which it owes its own existence.

It is significant that the same name—**Primitive Methodist**—which was chosen by the extreme democratic secession in England, was claimed by the seceding Church-party in Ireland, those who would have made Methodism a perpetual lean-to of the Established Church,

dependent on it for the Christian Sacraments throughout all time. The truth is that each extreme party fixed on and exaggerated one aspect of Methodism, ignoring others of at least equal importance. Thus the extremes of straitness and looseness both thought themselves **primitive**. The breach in Ireland has happily been healed: the original Methodists and the **Primitive Methodists** are now again one Church.

The parent Body devoutly rejoices in the success with which God has crowned the faithful labours of the younger. The **Primitive Methodist Conference** of 1887 reported 191,662 members of the Society, including those on trial; 1,038 travelling Preachers, 4,357 **Connexional** chapels, besides 1,490 "other chapels and preaching-rooms," and 410,950 Sunday-scholars.

**Primitive Methodism** and **Bible Christianity** must not be regarded as the result of **Connexional** agitation or the discussion of questions of Church theory. Both were outbreaks of evangelistic ardour which refused restraint. The constitution of the **Primitive Methodist Conference** is rather complex. Its conservative element is a permanent nucleus of twelve members, to whom are added four members elected by each Conference as its Representatives to the next. The recognition conceded to the Pastorate in Conference is the rule that the laity in Conference must be in proportion to the Pastorate as two to one. The Conference has greater **Connexional** authority than that of the **Methodist Free Church**, and consequently the Body is more closely knit together.

### What other important changes took place about this time?

By the Conference of 1810, "the solemn designation of our young preachers to the work of the Christian ministry among us" was rendered more impressive by "their formal admission into Full Connexion" at the Conference itself. The Superintendent who had successfully nominated a candidate to a Quarterly Meeting was required to put his recommendation into writing, and the District Meeting which endorsed such recommendation was ordered to present to Conference a detailed written report of each case. Every probationer at the close of his four years' trial was required to appear at Conference in person. Of late years, such had been the exigencies of the work, and to such an extent had those exigencies been allowed on occasion to overrule ordinary regulations, that a Local-preacher recommended by a Superintendent to the Conference, when the President had no List of Reserve, might be nominated to the September Quarterly

Meeting, and if passed at once despatched to the undermanned Circuit ; while a probationer, who at the expiry of his four years' trial was stationed at such a distance from the Conference town as to render his attendance at Conference too expensive in time and money, might be formally "admitted into Full Connexion" at his own District Meeting, and was accordingly announced in the *Minutes of Conference* as thus admitted.\*

The Conference of 1811 sanctioned the admission of organs into two Liverpool chapels. At several successive Conferences resolutions were passed regulating and restricting the use of musical instruments in our chapels. This Conference, too, was memorable for the resolution to purchase the Woodhouse-Grove estate as a second school for ministers' sons. The precedent of the Committee of Privileges was followed by the appointment of six laymen on the Managing Committee of this school.

### **What was the origin of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society?**

The year 1813 was distinguished by the formation of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. This was rendered necessary by the departure of Dr. Coke for India, and in order to fill the immense vacuum that would be left in the event of his decease. Long before this date Missions had been established by the Methodist Conference, and Dr. Coke had projected an organization, and published a Plan embodying his ideas, but no continuous action appears to have been taken upon it, probably on account of Dr. Coke's frequent and protracted absence from the country. At Wesley's last Conference a Missionary Committee had been appointed. William Wilberforce and the Earl of Dartmouth were amongst the earliest subscribers. But there had been no organized system of raising funds for Foreign Missions. The acknowledged originator of the movement for effecting this object was George Morley. The meeting was held in the "Old Boggard House" (Ghost-house, **Haunted House**) Chapel, Leeds. †

\* Thus in one District (Grimsby) Daniel Isaac, Benjamin Gregory, Thomas Jackson, John Martin, and Maximilian Wilson were in the like condition. They were, however, reported on to the District Committee by the Circuits to which they had been appointed.

† In early life it was our privilege to know, in their mature or declining years, a large proportion of the men who spoke at the meeting and formed the first Committee. Thomas Thompson, the Chairman, although a banker and member of Parliament, was externally remarkable for nothing so much as the striking rusticity of his dress, which would be hardly credited in these days.

It behoved the Wesleyan Methodist people to be a Missionary Church. The brothers Wesley began their career first by home missionary labours in Oxford, then by foreign mission enterprise in America. The Wesleyan hymnology fans the missionary flame, as with "the wafture of a world-wide wing." The Wesleyan theology is essentially missionary. And home Methodism has been well recouped for all its missionary sacrifices; which present a fine example of the working of the inspired principle: "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth." As we have diffused our light we have increased our light; as we have scattered our money we have increased our wealth. The annual Missionary Meeting has proved a most benign and healthful educative institution. A high order of platform eloquence has been developed, for example, in such men as Richard Watson, Robert Newton, William Dawson, John Anderson, George Steward, William Arthur, William Morley Punshon, Gervase Smith, William O. Simpson, Luke H. Wiseman, and Samuel Coley. It has introduced into our system a wholesome recreative element. The first great missionary speakers, even Watson, sometimes indulged in by-play of pleasantry, anecdote, and humorous illustration. "God loveth a cheerful giver;" and a sanctified hilarity characterised the Missionary meeting. Hence its popularity. In some villages it has outdone the old **Wakes** as the yearly gathering-time for friends. And then, as returned missionaries from the Indies (East and West), from Africa, New Zealand, and the Pacific Isles stood up before the people whose zealous liberality had sent them forth, and whose prayers had filled the sails of the mission-ships with favouring breath; and as they poured out their picturesque and epic eloquence, descriptive, narrative, and pulsing with a holy pathos and passion, accom-

This he retained from the days of his own young country life, through pure simplicity of character, and he persisted in it to the close of life, although it exposed him within our own memory to keen popular sarcasm in the political squibs of his time. He was much more like a farmer than a banker. But most of the speakers were men of imposing physique, such as James Wood, George Morley, Jabez Bunting, Richard Watson, W. G. Scarth, Michael Thomas Saddler, "Billy Dawson," Mr. Swale, the schoolmaster of Halifax, and Mr. Tweedale of Dewsbury. All these, each in his own order and sphere, were "princes of the people," men of honourable note and beneficent efficiency. The report which the ambassador of Pyrrhus gave of the impression made upon his mind by his introduction to the Roman Senate may well be applied to the principal speakers at this inaugural meeting on behalf of the Wesleyan Methodist Missions: "Their place of meeting was a temple, and they were an assembly of kings."

panied sometimes by living, speaking trophies of their triumphs, what store of authentic knowledge and of wholesome delectation was opened out before the enthusiastic crowds! Besides, the Mission field has been a grand gymnasium for the highest services at home. Such men as Joseph Taylor, Thomas H. Squance, Elijah Hoole, William Shaw, W. B. Boyce, Peter Duncan, Robert Young, William Arthur, Ebenezer E. Jenkins, J. Walton, and J. Kilner graduated in our Mission work. May God "keep this thing in the imagination of the thoughts" of His people's "heart," as He put it there at first, through the impassioned advocacy of His servants!

In 1815 an administrative Connexional Missionary Committee was formed, consisting of ministers and laymen; and a string of resolutions was carried determining the principles and the plan of Missionary Management. The constitution of the Society was completed in 1818, being embodied in the *Laws and Regulations of the General Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*. This was so well considered that but few and slight modifications have been needed since.

It must never be forgotten that the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society is the legatee of the herculean toils, the princely liberality, and the heroic enterprise of Thomas Coke. He was a good and noble man, who devoted three fortunes and all his time, faculties, and energies to the extension of the kingdom of God; crossing the Atlantic on that behalf eighteen times, before steam was applied to locomotion, and traversing England, Wales, Ireland, and the United States, preaching and organizing; and begging and dispensing thousands of pounds. His labours and achievements were such as sceptical criticism will pronounce mythical should sceptical criticism survive two hundred years. To no place can Lyte's fine lyric be more truly applied than to Coke's resting-place in the Indian Ocean:

"There is in the lone, lone sea  
A spot unmarked, but holy,  
For there the gallant and the free  
In his ocean-bed lies lowly.

"Sleep on, sleep on, thou mighty dead,  
A glorious grave they've found thee:  
The broad blue sky above thee spread,  
The boundless ocean round thee."

Several Districts having already followed the example of Leeds, the Conference earnestly recommended the rest to do likewise. Thus the Wesleyan-Methodist Missionary Society, like so many other parts of our economy, was of local and impromptu origination.

Notwithstanding all this exertion and expenditure and two large offshoots, Wesleyan Methodism had trebled its numbers in five-and-twenty years; and those, too, years of the severest national struggle and alarm.

In 1814 the Conference made a wise and useful alteration in its own constitution. Although Wesley had not constituted the Legal Conference of the hundred oldest men, it had been agreed that, to preclude all occasion for jealousy, vacancies in “the Hundred” should be filled up by men taken simply in the order of their length of service. This worked not amiss so long as the Hundred were about one-third of the entire Pastorate, but when the Pastorate included eight or nine hundred men, and the men who were in their prime when Wesley selected them as constituents of the Conference were, one after another, disappearing, it was found, or at least sagely feared, that a due intermixture of unabated mental force, activity, and enterprise might be necessary in order to animate the ripe judgment and the large experience of a council of the oldest men. Hence it was determined that every fourth admission to the Hundred should be by nomination from among men who had “travelled fourteen years” at least. Hitherto, again, the Hundred alone had voted for the President and Secretary, but now it was arranged that every preacher of fourteen years’ standing should have a vote for both the President and Secretary, the Legal Conference being “requested to elect the persons so nominated.” This change has been abundantly justified by its results.

At this time the economic rights of the people began to be more clearly and more practically recognized. The delay was, as we have seen, to a great extent due to the violence and artifice with which they had been urged by Mr. Kilham, which discredited the question in the eyes of many sedate and quiet-loving people. But now the gradual relegation of departmental administration to Committees formed of ministers and laymen, in equal numbers, went far towards rectifying the balance between pastoral and popular power. Beginning with the Committee of Privileges, the Woodhouse-Grove Committee, and the Missionary Committee, the principle was successively applied to the management of other funds.

**What has thus far characterized the development of the Wesleyan Methodist polity?**

The growth of Methodism up to this point has thus been described almost as distinctly as one might describe the growth of a plant, a

plant of God's own planting, to which He gave "the increase." It proved to be no chance-sown sapling, "planted in Summer, in Winter to fade." "Heaven sent it happy dew; Earth lent it sap anew." Its moral and material forces alike mightily grew and prevailed. If its pastors had been a self-seeking, worldly class, this could not have been.

### What was the third considerable offshoot from the Parent Body?

In 1815 the third considerable secession from Methodism took place—that distinguished from other Christian denominations by the name of "**Bible Christians.**" This was a purely spontaneous, and at first merely local movement, led by William O'Bryan, a fervid Cornishman of Irish descent, under the patronage of a Clergyman (Stevenson's *Methodist Worthies*, p. 865). His chief coadjutor was a young Devonian, named James Thorne. They took charge of their own converts. Mr. O'Bryan established a Book-room, edited a denominational Magazine, and formed a Missionary Society. After fourteen years, not being able to manage to his mind the denomination which he had founded, and claiming the continued exercise of patriarchal powers which the Bible Christian Conference would no longer concede, in 1829 he himself seceded from the denomination which he had created, and in 1835 embarked for the United States, where he once more originated a denomination. The leadership on his secession devolved on Mr. Thorne, who was five times elected President. He began a Bible Christian mission to Kent, with considerable success. In 1841 he founded a Bible Christian Connexional school, which has rendered solid service. In 1863 an attempt was made to accomplish a fusion of the denomination with the New Connexion, a carefully prepared plan being presented by an eminent and excellent minister of the Body, the Rev. F. W. Bourne. The scheme, though renewed in 1869 and strongly advocated by Dr. Cooke, was found to be impracticable. Yet there seems little but the name to differentiate the Body from some other Methodist communities. The testimony we have borne to the character of the Primitive Methodist Ministry applies also to that of the Bible Christians.\*

\* The **Bible Christians** clear themselves from the obvious and most serious charge of adopting an invidious sectarian designation, equivalent to "I am of Christ," by saying that the name was affixed to them by others, not chosen by themselves.

In some parts of Cornwall, and for a time, a good-tempered split continued amongst the Bible Christians; the Bryanites and the Thornites having separate meeting-places in the same town or village.\*

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## CHAPTER XIX.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES AND DEVELOPMENTS.—THE TITLE “REVEREND.”—DANIEL ISAAC’S ECCLESIASTICAL CLAIMS.—COMMITTEES OF REVIEW.—THE “LIVERPOOL MINUTES.”—CHURCH METHODIST AND NONCONFORMIST METHODIST SESSIONS.

### Did the financial difficulties of the Connexion cease?

At the Conference of 1816 a fine instance occurred of the self-denial of the “Preachers.” Trade, commerce, and agriculture being alike depressed, and the price of provisions having proportionately risen, the

\* William Howitt, in his *Year Book of the Country*, records the following suggestive incident :

“I was one Sunday near Boscastle, when two young men passed me and gave me a passing salutation. I looked at them and made myself certain that they were Primitive Methodists, or Ranters, as they are called in the midland counties. They had on blue coats without collars and broad-brimmed hats, having a certain resemblance to the Quaker costume, but never to be mistaken for the Quaker costume. The female Methodist dresses much like a female Friend, yet, by a knowing eye, can never be confounded with the female Friend, the colours and materials of her dress, as well as some particular cross-plaits in the crown of her bonnet, betraying the difference.

“Wishing to learn something of the number of the Primitive Methodists down there, I quickly got up and followed them. I soon found that they were Methodists, and going to preach in two villages not far off; but when I asked them if they were Primitive Methodists, they said :

“ ‘Primitive Methodists, Sir! What are Primitive Methodists?’

“ ‘O, Ranters, I mean! We call them Ranters.’

“ ‘Ranters, Sir! What are Ranters?’

“ ‘What, don’t you know what Ranters are?’

“ ‘No, Sir.’

“ ‘Then what do you call yourselves?’

“ ‘O, we are Bryanites, Sir.’

“ ‘And what are Bryanites? In what do you differ from the Wesleyan Methodists?’

“ ‘O, we don’t differ at all, Sir; we are all one, Sir.’

“ ‘Then why do you differ?’

Connexional revenues had seriously fallen, and the total deficiency was found to amount to £5,000. Literature, however good, being a luxury, the profits of the Book Room had, of course, sunk along with the general depression, and a large unsalable stock was on the Book Steward's hands. Thereupon the Preachers in full connexion took books, "at their own risk," to the value of £3,420; and three hundred Preachers voluntarily relinquished their nicely calculated financial claims to the amount of £2,600. Thus, at severe personal pinch, the Preachers themselves raised £6,000.

**Had the Conference to meet any further disciplinary difficulties?**

A notable act of the same Conference was the strong condemnation of "various passages" in Daniel Isaac's book entitled *Ecclesiastical Claims*. This censure was as just and necessary as it was severe, notwithstanding the great ability and the many excellencies of the author and the book. Unhappily Mr. Isaac did not content himself with

"Why, Mr. Bryan did not exactly agree with the Conference, and so he left the Old Connexion; and so we followed Mr. Bryan!"

"A little farther on I saw a great number of people pouring out of a chapel, and I stopped, and addressing a little knot of them, said:

"Well, I suppose you are Bryanites?"

"No, Sir. We are Thurnites' (Thornites).

"O, and pray what are the Thornites? In what do you differ from the Bryanites?"

"O, we don't differ at all, Sir; we are all one, Sir."

"Then again I asked: 'Why do you differ?'"

"O, Mr. Thurne left Mr. Bryan, and so we followed Mr. Thurne."

"Really! that was it? I suppose you read your Bible?"

"Yes, Sir! O, yes, Sir!"

"Well, there is one text that I wonder you have not happened to meet with."

"What is that, Sir?"

"Why, 'Some are for Paul, and some for Apollos, and some for Cephas, but I am for Jesus Christ' (*sic*). You seem to be following after your preachers, and not after principles."

"O, very good, Sir; all very good, Sir."

"And so I left these acquiescing Thornites, wondering what John Wesley would have made of them!"

This is instructively illustrative of one way in which the ranks of Methodist secession have been swelled. A large proportion of the "following" had no more idea of, or concern with, the principles at issue than a Bluejacket at Trafalgar knew or cared about the right or wrong of the Napoleonic wars.

exposing trenchantly the arrogant absurdity of Roman Catholic and High Church pretensions, but he more than called in question the rights and responsibilities of the Christian Pastorate as set forth in our own doctrinal standards, embodied in our system, and held by the Preachers and the people alike. Moreover, Mr. Isaac indulged in a coarseness and irreverence of style akin to that of several popular Antinomian Preachers (*e.g.*, Huntington and Gadsby), from which, too, his own powerful and often pathetic preaching was not always free. It was no justification that the Methodist pastor was simply rendering "railing for railing," and that, as his preface says, his language was "courtly as compared with (? some of) the anti-Methodist publications of the day." The fault was not that he gave play to satire, or even sarcasm; not only Apostles of the New Testament and prophets of the Old, and the saintliest of all Methodist writers, John Fletcher, but even our great Example Himself, had done the same. Yet vulgarity should be left to Antinomians, like Toplady, and to worldly ecclesiastical dignitaries, like Dean Swift and Sydney Smith. The debate on the question was very animated, and, as Ex-President John Barber said of an earlier debate in Conference, "There was plenty of pepper and salt" to season the solidity of the arguments. Mr. Everett in his biography admits that Mr. Isaac "treated the Conference with very little respect, and some of his brethren with too much levity and severity," and that the effect was "injurious to himself and to the Church of God." Nevertheless the book had a large sale. Moreover, clergymen of the Established Church seemed bent upon justifying his rudeness by outdoing it.

By the Conference of 1818 the rule forbidding the assumption of the title "Reverend" by Methodist pastors and their application of that respectful term to one another was set aside, and the prefix "Rev." distinguished in the Minutes of Conference the ministerial from the lay half of the Missionary Committee.

### What further economic development took place?

At the Conference of 1819 a separate **Children's Fund** was formed, the cost of the maintenance of the Ministers' children being apportioned among the Districts according to the number of members in the Society. This equalization of the burden was most equitable and necessary, and in accordance with the Connexional principle. At the same time, the distribution of circuit subsidies from the **Contingent Fund** was rendered more equable and discriminating by its being divided amongst the districts, and the time of Conference was thus

economized. Of late years, however, one of the evils of the growing disproportion between our congregations and the members of our Society—through the indulged distaste for Christian fellowship—has been an ever-increasing disproportion between the number of members in the Society and the number of Ministers called out for the supply of Methodist pulpits. By the Conference of 1879 a large committee, lay and ministerial, was appointed to consider the best means of rectifying this evil; and after mature and anxious deliberation a more equal and equitable plan was devised, the completing of which was due in great measure to the laborious aptitude of the Rev. J. Ernest Clapham. On this scheme the necessary contribution is apportioned to each district according to its carefully calculated financial strength, by the Conference in its Representative Session, and each District Meeting apportions it to the circuits on the same principle.

In 1818 originated the arrangement of preliminary departmental committees, composed of Ministers and laymen, afterwards called **Committees of Review**, which for nearly sixty years played so important and useful a part in the economics of Methodism. This, like all other developments on the popular side, was mainly due to Jabez Bunting.

**Did these disciplinary and economic difficulties distract attention from the evangelistic mission of Methodism?**

No. The Conference of 1820 was signalized by the production of the *Liverpool Minutes*. This invaluable document might be headed "**To bring to Remembrance.**" It is a perpetual memento, being a clear and rational embodiment of the principles, the spirit, and the habitudes to which Methodism owes alike its existence and its extension, and on fidelity to which its permanence and continuous efficiency depend. It was occasioned by a decrease in one year of four thousand six hundred and eighty-eight members.

But through God's blessing on a prompt and fervent recurrence to the Methodist maxims therein set forth, the loss was much more than recouped the next year by an increase of more than nine thousand in Great Britain alone. The *Liverpool Minutes* indicate the chief sources and symptoms of enfeeblement, backsliding, and decay in once flourishing Churches, the absolute necessity for a vigorous and vigilant discipline, and for maintaining unabated the pristine spirit of ever-aggressive evangelistic enterprise and the high spiritual tone of the Christian pastorate. A for ever timely warning is rung out against the disturbing, divisive, and destructive effect of any man's

taking advantage of the prestige, position, and facilities of the Methodist Connexion in order to propagate his own political preferences or those of the party to which he is attached. It is devoutly to be hoped that the annual reading of the *Liverpool Minutes* in our District Meetings and our Ministers' Meetings will never become a mere form.

### What was the origin of the Church Methodist secession?

In 1823 the Church Methodist party made a vigorous attempt to compress Wesleyan Methodism into its own mould, and in that effort, as a party, it expired. Its champion was Mr. Mark Robinson of Beverley, a Leader and Local-preacher. Its aim was to deprive the Methodist Societies of the administration of the Sacraments by their own Ministers and in their own chapels, to forbid to Methodist congregations the use of the Liturgy, to inhibit the performing of the burial service by Methodist Ministers, and to restrain Methodist Trustees from introducing an organ. In compensation for these sacrifices, Wesleyan Methodist Ministers were to be constituted a kind of inferior clergy, or subdiaconate, who were to owe "canonical obedience" to the Parish Priest, to the Diocesan, and the Metropolitan, and were to be allowed, under definite restrictions, to take some subsidiary part in the services at church. These services were to be repaid to the chapel by the clergyman's taking some informal part of exhortation, prayer-leading, sick-visitation, or Sunday-school-visiting, and by attending, at his convenience and discretion, as a hearer at the preaching, and as a brother at the lovefeast. But, lest the Methodist ministry "should be exalted above measure" by this semi-clerical status, Mark Robinson's scheme included a change in the constitution of the Conference, which was to be conformed to that of the New Connexion. Mr. Robinson embodied his views in a circular letter, and subsequently in a pamphlet, which was conclusively answered by two laymen—Dr. Sandwith and Mr. Charles Welch of Hull—and by three Ministers—Richard Watson, Thomas Galland, and Thomas Powell. Several eminent Churchmen took a keen interest in Robinson's plan, and corresponded with him extensively thereanent. Amongst these were Dr. Southey, the learned and genial Archdeacon Wrangham, and the Bishop of Lichfield, who evidently all meant well to Methodism and to the Established Church.

Two points, however, are perfectly clear. First, the scheme was such as Wesley would not have entertained for a moment. He would never have allowed his Assistants or his Helpers to let their work be interfered with by any parish clergyman, Bishop, or Archbishop

whomsoever, unless that clergyman were, like Fletcher, Grimshawe, Baddeley, or Coke, a regular "irregular." This is clear from his positive refusal to subject his Preachers to the very best parish clergy then in England, even to Venn of Huddersfield or Walker of Truro. Second, the utter unworkableness of such a system is glaring. The idea of the friendly clergy of the day was substantially that of Eari Nelson and of the prize essayists of the Home Reunion Society of the present day, and may be expressed in the very words of Mr. Borradaile's recent proposal: "The Wesleyan Connexion was to be 'a Home Missionary Society within the Church of England, employing its own agents, and regulating its own affairs.'" Mr. Mowbray's plan for the reabsorption of Methodism into the Established Church is far more liberal than that of Mark Robinson, and, indeed, than that of Dr. Coke, which the Church authorities of his day rejected.\*

Mr. Robinson, finding that the Connexion did not adopt his scheme, seceded, with a small following, which took the name of **Church Methodists**, and built a chapel at Cherry Burton, beyond which rural parish it never spread, and from which it soon vanished.

Mr. Robinson, however, accomplished two good things by this movement. First, the secession of the Church Methodists in 1825 terminated the existence of a Church Methodist party within Methodism. Secondly, he called forth from leading Wesleyan Methodist Ministers and laymen a noble declaration and vindication of true, sound, and impregnable Wesleyan Methodist Church principles. Richard Watson, in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, then under the conservative editorship of Thomas Jackson, sustained by the "assistance" of Jabez Bunting and Richard Watson, put forth and triumphantly maintained the following thesis, which he, in effect, nailed to the door of every Wesleyan Methodist chapel: "**We are, in the proper sense, a Church of Christ, according to the Scriptural model.**"

And, assuredly, the course of events since 1825, whether in Methodism or in the Established Church, has not been such as to weaken the force of the eloquent argumentation of Methodism's grandest thinker and the noblest theologian of that time.

### What occasioned the Protestant Methodist secession ?

Two years after the secession of the small Church Methodist party, in 1827, occurred a somewhat larger secession: that of the democratic party in Methodism. The occasion of it was the granting by the Con-

\* See the *Church Quarterly* for January, 1885.

ference the request of the Trustees of Brunswick Chapel, Leeds, for leave to erect an organ in that sanctuary. The Connexional law was that no Trustees might take that step without the express consent of Conference, the object of the law being to prevent a breach of harmony in local Societies. The Superintendent of the Circuit consulted the Leaders' Meeting on the matter. The affair was brought before the District Meeting, which had a constitutional cognizance of the matter, the majority of whom recommended the non-introduction of the organ. The Trustees appealed against this decision to the Conference. A majority of the Local-preachers opposed the wish of the Trustees, and moved the Leaders' Meeting to take action in the same direction. The request of the Trustees was referred by Conference to a committee, before which a deputation from the objecting Leaders' Meeting was heard at length. The committee thought the objections of the Leaders' Meeting to the request of the Trustees not of sufficient weight to warrant the Conference in rejecting their application, and advised the Conference accordingly. The Conference adopted their recommendation.

The effect of this decision on the Leeds Societies was most disastrous. The more violent opponents called a number of indignation meetings, and issued inflammatory publications. The result was a secession of nearly a thousand members. Thereupon a Special District Meeting was summoned, consisting of the Ministers of the District, the President and Secretary of the Conference, and three other Ministers who had unusual influence in Leeds: George Marsden, John Burdsall, and Robert Newton. The purpose of the meeting was to take the most prompt and likely action in order to the healing of the breach. The committee invited all who at the beginning of the dispute had held the office of Leader or Local-preacher in the Town Society in the Leeds East Circuit, of which Brunswick Chapel was the head, to meet them and frankly and fully lay bare their grievances, due notice being given to each Leader and Local-preacher. Many office-bearers in the Leeds West Circuit sympathized with their dissident brethren in the East. The Leaders and Local-preachers of that circuit were, in like manner, invited to meet the committee at a subsequent session with the same object. This was clearly the regular, constitutional, and judicious course, the matter in dispute being really the affair of the Society and congregation connected with Brunswick Chapel. The majority of the Leeds East Leaders, however, definitively refused to meet the committee except at the same time with the Local-preachers and Leaders of the other circuit. This was an unconstitutional demand, it being one of the primary principles of Methodist

polity that no circuit can be allowed to intermeddle with the affairs of any other circuit. Besides, the assembling of such a large number of excited individuals, at the same time, must have been fatal to calmness of consideration ; and the plain object of the proposal was to swamp their brethren who held other views. Those Leaders and Local-preachers, however, who did attend were heard at length ; when it became plain that to the greater number the organ was but the occasion of the outbreak.

For some time an element of disturbance and division had been active in the Leeds Societies. Its nucleus was the institution called "the New Schools." The Leeds Sunday-school system had originated in the Established Church, but subsequently the various Nonconforming bodies had withdrawn from the old Church-schools, and opened "the New Schools," which at first were worked unitedly. Later, however, one Dissenting congregation after another preferred to have a Sunday-school of its own, till at last "the New Schools" were left entirely in Methodist hands. Nevertheless, they were not conducted on the plan approved by the Conference, but were made the vehicles of secular instruction on the Lord's day ; and the constitutional oversight by the Methodist Pastorate was regarded as an interference with the working of an independent institution which had not grown out of the ordinary circuit organization.

When the grievances complained of were laid before the District Committee, they were found to be, for the most part, objections to the constitution and the carrying out of the Wesleyan Methodist system. One of the points included in the *ultimatum* of the dissentient Leaders and Local-preachers was that the Leaders' Meeting should have the power of determining all matters, great and small, connected with public worship, from the administration of the Sacraments to the equipment of the singing pew ; and that neither the wish of the Trustees of the chapel and of the unofficial worshippers at that chapel, nor the judgment of the Conference as to the welfare of the Society, should have any force against the opinion of a majority of the Leaders Meeting. Thus, in the name of liberty, absolute powers were claimed for an official meeting constituted for another purpose, and with well-defined duties and rights. This denuding of the Trustees on the one hand and the Conference on the other of well-established powers, in order to concentrate authority in such matters in one particular local meeting, was altogether inadmissible. Had the majority of the Leaders taken the view of the Trustees, their "tyranny" would have been denounced as freely as was the appellate jurisdiction of the Conference.

There was but one expulsion, that of a Local-preacher, expressly because he declared his resolve to persist in holding meetings for the purpose of agitating the Society till his own views were carried.

The seceders did not join either the Primitive Methodists or the Methodist New Connexion, in either of which communities their ideas of democratic Church-government might have been realized. They organized themselves into a distinct denomination, bearing at first the name of **Nonconforming Methodists**, afterwards that of **Protestant Methodists**. They divided the Societies in Leeds and several neighbouring circuits, built chapels, and formed a circuit. They issued a manifesto, the principle of which was circuit independence, and the chief burden of which was a denunciation of the Wesleyan Methodist polity. They subsequently opened a chapel in London, in which the Liturgy of the Established Church was used, although the dread that an organ might prepare the way for the Liturgy had been one of their strongest objections. They repudiated any appellate jurisdiction to which circuit differences might be referred. The fact is plain, what they wanted was a Methodism, not only of their own moulding, but also of their own managing.

### What was the real significance of this secession ?

Like many other movements of the kind, its motives were somewhat complex. No doubt many opponents of the introduction of the organ sincerely regarded it as at least perilous to the simplicity of Methodist worship. This was probably the main objection of the most influential seceder, Mr. Sigston, a well-known Methodist schoolmaster, the friend and biographer of Bramwell. His prominence was such that the community were popularly called **Sigstonites**. But it was all the more strange that he and those who sympathized with him did not see that "bitterness" in speech, writing, and action, of which Mr. Sigston was far from being guiltless, was more out of harmony with the tone and spirit of pure primitive Methodism and genuine Christianity than the most exquisite, the most powerful, and the most inclusive musical instrument could possibly be. It is easy enough to be wise after the fact, and to conclude that it would have been better to defer the introduction of an organ than to incur a disastrous split. Assuredly the Brunswick organ was terribly expensive. A thousand pounds was a heavy price for an organ in a Methodist chapel ; but a thousand members is an incalculably larger sacrifice. And it is fair to say that sound and loyal Local-preachers, like William Dawson and John Banks, thought that the Brunswick Trustees had "paid sadly too

dear for their whistle;" and certainly it would have been a magnanimous act of the Trustees had they resolved to postpone the erection of the organ till the opposition had subsided. But here the passionate fondness of the West Riding people for music, especially sacred music, must be taken into the account. Had the Conference foreseen the cost to the Connexion of the Brunswick organ, they would assuredly have paused longer than they did before they sanctioned its erection. But they had no idea that such would be the result. They were in a very difficult dilemma. If they refused the request of the Trustees, they would have grievously offended a very large number of the best Leeds Methodists; and they could have given no reason whatever for their refusal but what they as well as the Brunswick Trustees regarded as an unreasonable opposition. Many years before this date an organ had been opened with the sanction of Conference in the Methodist chapel in Keighley, and two years before in the principal chapel of the neighbouring town, Wakefield. Besides this, there was an organ in the Wesleyan chapel at Burley, where the objecting Local-preachers were in the habit of preaching. The fact, if it would have proved to be the fact, that the organ-wishing worshippers loved Methodism too much to leave it had the case been decided against them, would only show that they were more sensible and reasonable people, more loyal Methodists, and more advanced Christians than those who preferred their own way to the peace and the integrity of Methodism.

But both the Trustees and the Ministers had sufficient insight to perceive that with the leading opponents the organ was made a mere rallying drum of revolt against the Methodist system of Church-government. The seceders lost no time in justifying this view by actually introducing an organ into one of their preaching-places. It is almost certain that the main body of the seceders were drawn away by personal attachment to the leaders of the movement, and by the spell of the party cries: "Liberty," "Old Methodist simplicity of worship," etc.

Men who, when they could not carry their own views on such a question as organ or no organ against those of a large number of their brethren, forthwith seceded, and that not peaceably, but carried on a furious agitation to effect a transference of power from the appellate Connexional court which had decided against them to some lower and local court which would have decided in their favour, were not likely to make any serious endeavour to "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," except on condition of the dominance of their own

tastes and theories. The next question that arose would have renewed the paroxysm.

The Protestant Methodists remained a very small community within a narrow area, and ultimately effected a junction with the kindred Wesleyan Methodist Association, which arose a few years later.

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## CHAPTER XX.

THE "DERBY FAITH."—THE FIRST METHODIST SECESSION ON DOCTRINAL GROUNDS.—THE THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION.—THE FIRST POLITICAL METHODIST NEWSPAPER.—RESIGNATION OF JOSEPH RAYNER STEPHENS.

**Has there ever been a secession from the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion on doctrinal grounds ?**

One ; but that very small and short-lived. It took place in 1835.

During a great revival at Redditch, an able schoolmaster, who was also a fervid and effective preacher, broached Sandemanian views with regard to saving faith, maintaining that it is simply an ordinary mental operation, not requiring supernatural assistance. The coldness of this tenet was strangely overcompensated by wildnesses in the mode of carrying on prayer-meetings and fellowship meetings. In Redditch, however, no harm was done ; the doctrine was good-temperedly discussed and genially ventilated. But on his removal to Derby the schoolmaster found powerful coadjutors in two lady-preachers. His views spread amongst the Society ; and when the Ministers endeavoured to restrain the accompanying eccentricities and extravagances, they were violently resisted. The result was a secession of about seven hundred members, including thirteen Local-preachers. They assumed the name **Arminian Methodists**, but were popularly known as the **Derby-Faith Folks**. They built a chapel in Derby. Their attempts to propagate their opinions and usages in the neighbouring Circuits utterly failed, and the whole affair soon collapsed, its originator becoming an Independent Minister. Their distinctive tenet was clearly contrary to our standards and the Word of God, the Scriptural doctrine being expressed in the verse :—

"I know the work is wholly Thine,  
The **gift of faith is all Divine** ;  
But if on Thee we call,  
Thou wilt the benefit bestow,  
And give us hearts to feel and know  
That Thou hast died for all,"

### How did the Theological Institution originate ?

Immediately after the Leeds disruption, at the Conference of 1829, a movement was instituted which was the occasion of the next great split in Methodism. The following very moderate resolution was passed : " We are unanimously of opinion that the time is now fully come when some more systematic and effectual plan ought to be attempted for affording for those Preachers who have been placed on the **List of Reserve** such means of instruction in the doctrines and discipline of Methodism and general improvement as may prepare them for future usefulness " (*Minutes*, 1829, p. 514). A strong and well-chosen committee was appointed to " revise and complete the plan " presented to Conference by a previous committee, which had taken six years for the maturing of its recommendations ; which plan was to be circulated " among the Preachers and among our principal friends in every circuit ; " while the Preachers were directed " privately to consult our leading friends in their respective circuits on the subject, " in order to ascertain whether the Connexion was, both morally and materially, prepared for the movement.

Although Conference felt it necessary to proceed so cautiously and tentatively in this matter, yet the question had been before the Connexion from the beginning. At the very first Conference, in 1744, when the subject of the employment of lay-preachers was discussed, the question was asked : " Can we have a seminary for labourers ? Answer : If God spare us till another Conference. " The second Conference took up the matter again. " Can we have a seminary for labourers yet ? Answer : Not till God give us a proper tutor. "

But it was found that the want of a proper tutor was not the only difficulty in the way. The immediate and urgent exigencies of the work of God compelled the **thrusting forth** of labourers into the harvest, with little or no preliminary training. Their four years' probation, under careful and judicious supervision and guidance, was their apprenticeship to this great work. Yet, as we have seen, Wesley did all he could to direct, assist, and animate the self-culture of his " Helpers ; " and most of them and most of their successors did their best to remedy the deficiencies of their education. And it is surprising to what an extent they succeeded. Men who had received no education but that which the village school could give them before they reached their ninth birthday, when they were sent into the fields to scare birds or tend swine, attained, by the study of the best models, especially Wesley himself, a pure and forceful English—which might put to shame the unprecise conventional compositions of many university

men—and managed out of their pittance to collect some of the choicest writings of the various schools of Protestant Divinity.

### What was the first political Methodist newspaper ?

The Conference of 1833 was painfully occupied with the deleterious, disturbing, and divisive effect of the first political Methodist newspaper. This did not go so far as to proclaim itself by its title as distinctively representing Methodist opinion, but took the name of "**Christian Advocate.**" Being edited by the son of an ex-President, the Rev. John Stephens, and the brother of one of the most promising young Methodist Ministers, assisted by the son of another eminent Methodist Minister, no fear was at first entertained with regard to it. Several Ministers were on its staff of contributors, and others put their names to a recommendation of it as a family newspaper. It won a wide circulation. Gradually, however, it became a pronounced and aggressive political organ, of a most dictatorial tone. It fiercely assailed Jabez Bunting for having dared to vote at a general election in favour of a statesman of high character whose politics were of another colour than those of the *Christian Advocate*. It also assumed a general censorship of the proceedings of the Churches, bitterly attacking, for example, the London Missionary Society. As it still claimed to be an organ of Wesleyan Methodist opinion, the Conference felt bound to take note of it, the Liverpool District Committee having sent up to Conference a resolution condemnatory of the paper. Amongst those who spoke most strongly were five Ministers who were reckoned amongst the leading Liberals of the Connexion: William Atherton, Jacob Stanley, James Dixon, James Bromley, and Thomas Rowland. Two resolutions were passed, one defending Jabez Bunting against the assault which the *Christian Advocate* had made upon him, the other "disclaiming on the part of the Conference any connection with the *Christian Advocate* newspaper." The paper subsequently devoted itself to the depreciation of the Conference and of existing Methodism. It soon, however, found its "occupation gone" as an instrument of Connexional agitation, and was merged in the *Patriot*, an organ of political Dissent, which in turn, through various metamorphoses, necessitated by a want of success by no means attributable to want of literary ability, became at last, after changes of proprietary, the *Nonconformist*.

The most serious distraction connected with the *Christian Advocate* resulted from the course pursued by its editor's able and eloquent brother, Joseph Rayner Stephens, who had imbibed the political and

ecclesiastico-political theories which that paper was endeavouring to propagate. Joseph R. Stephens at the Conference of 1832 completed the third year of his "full connexion" with the Methodist ministry, being of the same standing as was Alexander Kilham when he began his career of agitation. He had spent four years as our missionary at Stockholm.

In January, 1834, a public meeting was called at Ashton-under-Lyne for the purpose of forming a **Church Separation Society**, at which Mr. Stephens spoke at length and with warmth in favour of its object, presenting a memorial to the same effect signed by more than a hundred Leaders, Local-preachers, and other male members of the Wesleyan Methodist Society at Ashton, the preamble to the memorial, at his suggestion, describing them as "Wesleyan Methodists." He also took part at similar public meetings in the neighbouring towns. He still further accepted the office of Corresponding Secretary to the Society. He introduced into Methodist chapels petitions to Parliament praying for a separation of Church and State, and from the pulpit urged the congregation to sign them. All this was done in utter disregard of the authority of his Superintendent. These proceedings were the more objectionable because the Pastoral Address from the Conference of 1833 had earnestly counselled resolute moderation in political matters in the then excited condition of the country. The Chairman of the District, Robert Newton, having received protests from Wesleyan Methodists against the agitating course which Mr. Stephens was pursuing, sent him a written notice that his conduct must be the subject of investigation at the ensuing District Meeting.

Mr. Newton gave him the names of the complainants. The charges were conveyed to him as "**complaints.**"

The investigation, which, on Mr. Stephens' demand, took the shape of a formal trial, was conducted in the most regular manner. He did not attempt to deny the facts which were brought against him, but took up the preposterous position which Mr. Kilham had assumed; namely, that the validity or inconclusiveness of his published *arguments* should first be discussed and determined, and that his personal action should be judged of according to the strength or weakness of his reasonings. He demanded that the District Meeting, before it proceeded to the discharge of its judicial responsibilities, should resolve itself into a Debating Society on the question of the union of Church and State. As he phrased it, they must "try the question itself." This demand was, of course, treated as it deserved. The District Committee confined

itself to the question whether, in the public acts which Brother Stephens admitted himself to have performed, his conduct had been in accordance with the requirements of his position as a Wesleyan Methodist Minister. Dr. Warren strongly objected to the proceeding against Mr. Stephens "by way of charges," forgetting that Mr. Stephens himself, by demanding that course, had shut the meeting up to it. After a solemn and impartial consideration of the case, a series of condemnatory resolutions was unanimously adopted, of which the *gravamen* was that Brother Stephens, by his admitted acts, had "committed the character of the Connexion upon a question involving its public credit as well as its internal tranquillity;" that he had "violated the directions of the Conference in its last Pastoral Address to the Societies, which Brother Stephens, as well as every other Methodist Preacher, was bound, by his example at least, to enforce;" that "Brother Stephens, in accepting the office of Corresponding Secretary to the Ashton Church Separation Society, acted contrary to his peculiar calling and solemn engagements as a Methodist Preacher;" that he had acted contrary to the express direction of his Superintendent; that "Brother Stephens be required to resign his office as Secretary to the Church Separation Society, and to abstain, until the next Conference, from taking any part in the proceedings of that Society;" and that "in the event of a violation of this injunction, he be forthwith suspended until the Conference." Mr. Stephens declared that "he could not acknowledge the authority of the meeting," and that he should not resign his secretaryship to the Church Separation Society. He was therefore "suspended" till Conference.

The Conference approved of the action of the District Committee, and, after hearing Mr. Stephens' eloquent and acute defence, unanimously required from him

"A distinct pledge, not in reference to any peculiarities of private opinion, but of his readiness to meet, as a Wesleyan Methodist Minister, the wishes of his brethren, and to consult the peace and good order of the Connexion, by strictly refraining from all future proceedings similar in character and spirit to those which have been so justly offensive in the past year, and to devote himself wholly to his proper work and calling, and that if Mr. Stephens now refuse this pledge, his suspension shall be continued till the meeting of the Conference in 1835, in the hope that reflection and advice will induce him to make such concessions. . . . Whenever Mr. Stephens shall forward to our President in writing the distinct pledge as to his future conduct required by the preceding resolution, the President shall be at liberty to place him in a circuit."

Dr. Beaumont, the leader of young Methodist Liberalism, said "He thought the District Meeting had done its duty, and that Stephens

should have submitted. But Wesley's bearing toward the Church was that of a rower in a boat: his face was always steadily fixed on the Church, but every stroke of the oar took him further away from it. He objected to be tacked in any way to the Church of England." Thus the vote was not a party vote. Only four Ministers voted against any one of the resolutions

At Mr. Stephens' request, a committee was appointed to confer with him. The next day he declared that he could not give the pledge, and asked leave to resign his place in the Methodist ministry. This was conceded.

This last step of Mr. Stephens was most honourable. He felt that the conditions on which he had received his place in the Methodist ministry bound him to retire without throwing on the Conference the pain and odium of his expulsion. About seven hundred members of the Society in Ashton seceded with Mr. Stephens as their pastor. He, however, made an effort to keep up the agitation within the Body he had left. At a meeting in a Particular Baptist chapel in Manchester, a committee was appointed for the avowed purpose of exciting discontent amongst the Methodist people with the principles of Methodist polity. The *Christian Advocate*, too, carried on the strife. The paper which had denounced a Wesleyan Minister for quietly recording his vote for a statesman of unblemished reputation who held views differing from those which that paper advocated, characteristically, claimed for Methodist Ministers of views similar to its own the right to take part in ecclesiastico-political public meetings and to take office in ecclesiastico-political associations.

Mr. Stephens became a great democratic agitator, the favourite orator at mass-meetings on the moors; and for his seditious and inflammatory speeches was sentenced to imprisonment for a term of years. At length, however, he became a strong Conservative.

The principles involved in the action of Conference with regard to Joseph Rayner Stephens are as simple and intelligible as they are solid and impregnable, and are essential to the carrying out of the true mission of Methodism and to the peaceful well-working, if not the very integrity, of the system. These principles are: 1. That "Methodism does not exist for the purposes of party," and, as a necessary practical deduction, that its organization and fellowship, which have grown out of purely spiritual needs and forces, must not be perverted to party purposes. Its controlling motto must ever be: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness."

That this was the predominant feeling of the Conference is indi-

cated by the following passage in the Pastoral Address for 1834  
 “Whatever rights you possess, exercise them as Christian professors as to temper, expression, and object. Carefully avoid political contention and strife. Few engage in such disputations without losing sight, at least for the time, of the solemn injunction: ‘Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you. Whether in the prosecution of your temporal calling or the exercise of your political rights, aim at possessing and manifesting ‘the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.’ Labour to preserve an unruffled mental tranquillity which is so eminently favourable to communion with the Father and His Son.”

2. A Wesleyan Methodist Minister is not at liberty to take a position or pursue a course which would endanger “the internal tranquillity of the Connexion.” The case of a Wesleyan Methodist Minister is widely different from that of a member of the Congregational Union, of which the very basis is political as well as doctrinal. The members of a Dissenting Minister’s flock are nearly all of the same political creed and colour. Amongst Wesleyan Methodists it is far otherwise. A Wesleyan Minister cannot take advantage of his position to propagate his own party notions without provoking a just sense of unfairness in members of his own particular flock and members of our Connexion generally, who know that those notions form no part of Methodism at all. They know that he is set apart and sustained for no such purpose, but for a purpose infinitely higher.

3. A Wesleyan Minister who takes a prominent political position, and occupies his thought and time in furthering “the purposes of party,” acts “contrary to his peculiar calling and solemn engagements as a Methodist Preacher.” The Methodist Preacher has a “peculiar calling,” to give himself wholly to which he is pledged by the most “solemn engagements.”\*

So long as the latest direction of the Conference on this subject is sensitively observed by the brethren, the mischief wrought by the

\* Dr. Waddy told us with great relish the way in which he was cured of taking a public part in a political contest. A Methodist gentleman having come forward as the Conservative candidate for Sheffield whilst Mr. Waddy was stationed in that town, he and another eminent Methodist Minister appeared on the hustings to countenance his candidature. Suddenly a voice from the edge of the crowd was heard to cry: “Wouldn’t it be better for Mr. Waddy and Mr. — to be in their studies preparing their sermons, or praying for their people; or else visiting some Methodist house that has not had a Methodist Preacher inside it for months?”

*Christian Advocate* and Joseph Rayner Stephens can never be repeated.

“INTERFERENCE OF MINISTERS IN POLITICAL MATTERS.

“After careful consideration of this subject, the Conference resolves as follows : The Conference recognises on the one hand the individual freedom of its Ministers as Christian citizens, and on the other hand their *responsibility to each other and the Conference* as members of a *non-political body*, and *confides in their loyalty and honour* so to regulate and control their public action as *not to imperil the unity of the Methodist brotherhood* or disturb the peace of the Connexion” (*Minutes*, 1875, pp. 217, 218).

4. Another principle established was that no Wesleyan Methodist Minister is at liberty to take a public position in politics which his Superintendent thinks to be detrimental or dangerous to the peace and prosperity of the Society and congregations. Strong as was the divergence of judgment amongst the brethren as to political questions, the decision of the Conference was all but unanimous.

**Has the action of Conference with regard to Ministers who have made themselves prominent in Party politics been one-sided ?**

In the very few instances in which, during the last thirty years, Conference has found it necessary to animadvert on the conduct of a minister in relation to political questions, there has been a greater number of instances in which a prominent defence of a threatened State-Church has “received its comment” than of cases wherein the opposite course has been called in question and deplored.

The ardent and active sympathy of almost the entire body of Wesleyan ministers and people, Dr. Bunting at their head, with the Scottish Free Church movement, which commenced and culminated so soon after the affair of Joseph Rayner Stephens, proves that the Methodist Conference and the Methodist people of fifty years ago cared far more for purity and livingness of doctrine, and for Church life, liberty and self-government than for its union with the State.

Moreover, the neutrality of Methodism between the Established Church and political Dissent has always been an armed neutrality. Wesleyan Methodism has never given “place by subjection,” to sacerdotal assumption and clerical misrepresentation or arrogance.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION.—THE WESLEYAN METHODIST ASSOCIATION.

**How did the next Secession originate?**

The next secession was occasioned by the cautious endeavour of the Conference to realize an object which, as we have seen, Wesley had contemplated from the very beginning: namely, a seminary for the education of accepted candidates for the Wesleyan ministry. The idea and the precedent of such an Institution as that contemplated was at least as old as the time of Elijah, if not of Samuel. The design of "the schools of the prophets" was to qualify godly men who were endowed with the prophetic gift for the most effective exercise of that gift. And it seems clear that the *curriculum* of those ancient seminaries was not confined to the Holy Scriptures. It included at least poetry and music.

The necessity for such an Institution had become still more apparent and urgent from the resolve to open, at Sheffield, a Methodist High School, or "college;" since an educated laity requires an educated Ministry. The Conference of 1833 reappointed the Committee charged with maturing a plan "for the formation of a Literary and Theological Institution, with the design to promote the improvement of the junior preachers in the Methodist Connexion;" and the Committee suggested three ministers whom it deemed most suitable to take charge of the various departments of the Institution. As to the plan, there was perfect unanimity; but Dr. Warren proposed two other names as better fitted for the Theological and the Classical tutorships than those first placed before the meeting. His amendment was not supported. Dr. Warren wished the seminary to be called "a college;" the rest preferred the humbler title **Institution**. He declared that the nominations had "materially influenced" his "judgment on those points on which he had concurred." At the final meeting of the Committee previously to Conference, Dr. Warren avowed: "I have changed my opinion on the entire project." When in Conference it was moved "that the Conference should agree to the recommendations of the Committee for the establishment of an Institution," Dr. Warren moved as an amendment: "That we pass to the order of the day." In his speech he ignored the main question, the necessity or desirableness of the Institution, and brought against Jabez Bunting an elaborate impeachment of ambitious

designs, and against the Committee the charge of having lent themselves to the furtherance of those designs.

This was clearly an unwarrantable course. Occasion for it was taken from the recommendation of the Committee that Dr. Bunting should be appointed to the double office of President of the Institution and Theological Tutor, whilst retaining his office of Senior Missionary Secretary. The combination of the Presidency with the Theological Tutorship, so long as the Institution was small, and "with few men in it," had much in its favour, were a suitable man available. But had Dr. Warren contented himself with objecting to the accumulation of offices on one man as injurious alike to the man himself and to the public service, and as ignoring the distribution of gifts by the Head of the Church, he would have had a much fairer case. Yet it was strange that he made no objection to this in Committee, where he was bound to state his views with a manly explicitness. To attribute the recommendation to Mr. Bunting's own ambition was indefensible, since he alone had objected to the Committee's making any nomination at all. The charge against the Committee of being accomplices of Mr. Bunting's ambition was simply ridiculous, when such a man as Thomas Galland was a member; and Dr. Warren himself should have exposed the conspiracy at once, if he really believed in its existence.

In the Conference thirty-two ministers supported Dr. Warren's amendment, the very names of the more prominent being sufficient guarantee that their objection was not to a Theological Institution.

Dr. Bunting was appointed President of the Institution in order that the enterprise at its initiation might have the advantage of his unrivalled organizing and administrative gift, and of his most effective influence. The saintly and sweet-natured Joseph Entwisle was selected for the House-Governorship. The equally fine-spirited and gentle-mannered John Hannah was installed in the Theological Tutorship. No other designation was made. A Theological Institution Committee was appointed, consisting of ministers and laymen.

Shortly after Conference, Dr. Warren issued a bulky pamphlet entitled: *Remarks on the Wesleyan Theological Institution for the Education of the Junior Preachers, together with the Substance of a Speech delivered in the Conference. By Samuel Warren, LL.D.* The object of the pamphlet was to convince the public that the project for a Theological Institution was, in fact, a scheme for investing Jabez Bunting and his most devoted adherents with the supreme power in Methodism.

**Wherein did Dr. Warren's Agitation resemble that of Mr. Kilham?**

It was led by a minister, who stirred up the people against the Conference. It was a public attack, not only on the character of several eminent ministers, but also on the Conference itself.

**In what respect did Dr. Warren's Agitation differ from Mr. Kilham's?**

The Conference had now a very different antagonist from Alexander Kilham or Joseph Rayner Stephens. They were impetuous young men, but just emerged from their probation. Dr. Warren was an eminent minister of more than thirty years' standing, who had occupied prominent positions in the Connexion, was then the Superintendent of the First Manchester Circuit, and was reckoned one of the leading men of the Body, by reason of his education and experience. He had studied closely the constitution of Wesleyan Methodism, and had published *A Digest of the Laws and Regulations of Wesleyan Methodism*.

**What step was taken with regard to Dr. Warren's pamphlet?**

The first responsibility in the case rested upon Robert Newton, Chairman of the Manchester District, who went about his work in the most quiet, kindly, and judicious manner. He called on Dr. Warren, wisely taking with him two senior ministers, who might be witnesses of the interview, and help to give it effect. They pointed out to Dr. Warren the disasters which could not but result from his publication, and tried to persuade him to withdraw it from further circulation. This he refused to do. Mr. Newton then reminded him what a painful duty this refusal would impose upon him as Chairman of the District. Dr. Warren answered: "I have not studied Methodism so long as not to know all the bearings of what I have done, and I am fully aware that you must proceed in the usual way." He was evidently resolved to try conclusions with the law and constitution of Methodism. The Chairman paid him a second visit, with the like result.

**What was Dr. Warren's next step?**

Meanwhile Dr. Warren took a course which broke up the Branch Missionary Societies in his Circuit. At the Quarterly Meeting, he "encouraged the introduction of a series of resolutions which, besides involving a charge against the Conference of having violated its own solemn pledge and compact with the people, embodied principles sub-

versive in their tendency of everything Wesleyan in the government and discipline of Methodism."

Meanwhile his pamphlet was disturbing the whole Connexion. He was therefore summoned before a Special District Meeting, to answer for the injurious "misrepresentations" contained in his pamphlet. The investigation had not proceeded far when he declared that he would "not stand" his trial unless a brother who was not a member of the meeting might be present, and act as his adviser. This precedent could not be allowed. He then declared in writing: "I have come to this final conclusion: that I do not think it my duty to attend any future session of the District Meeting called in my name." This left the District Meeting no alternative but to let judgment go by default. He was suspended from his ministerial functions until the next Conference, unless within a month he should come to a better mind.

On the very next day a placard appeared announcing a publication entitled: *The Unjust and Unconstitutional Proceedings of the Special District Meeting*. Dr. Warren at the same time sent a letter to the Chairman warning him against intruding into the Circuit of which Conference had made Dr. Warren Superintendent.

Thereupon legal notice was served on Dr. Warren by the Trustees of Oldham Street Chapel inhibiting him from the pulpit and the vestries of that chapel. This was followed by the like notice with regard to other chapels in the Circuit.

To this he replied by preaching wherever he could obtain access to a pulpit, and by summoning a rival Leaders' Meeting. Meanwhile a "Grand Central Association" was formed for the purpose of opposing the Theological Institution and effecting changes in the polity of Methodism. This Association issued a manifesto declaratory of its objects. These were: "1. To obtain from Conference a disavowal of the powers exercised by the Special District Meeting at Leeds in 1827." (Thus the present agitation at once connected itself with that which had taken place seven years before.) "2. A revision of the rules of 1797. 3. To obtain from Conference their consent to open all its sittings to the public, . . . excepting only when the characters of the preachers are under consideration, and when the members of the Legalised Fund are transacting their own peculiar business." They agreed that until Conference should make these concessions no contribution should be made to any Connexional Fund.

They further insisted that all voting in the Conference should be by ballot.

**Wherein did the Policy of the agitators of 1834 differ from that of some earlier and later dissentients ?**

Dr. Warren's party shrank from the iniquity of refusing support to ministers whose ministrations they were still enjoying. But the principle of coercing Conference by withholding Connexional supplies was deliberately adopted ; and the attack was made on the means of support of missionaries among the heathen, of worn-out ministers and ministers widows, and of struggling country Circuits. Dr. Warren was a party to this policy.

All former agitators, when they could neither accomplish their purpose nor submit to rule, had been content with seceding and carrying away with them as many members of the Society and as much Connexional property as possible. Dr. Warren was the first to appeal against the laws of Methodism to the law of the land. Two bills were filed in the Vice-Chancellor's court : the first against the Trustees of Oldham Street Chapel, Manchester, by Dr. Warren ; the second by Dr. Warren and four Trustees against the rest of the Trustees of Oldham Road Chapel. Dr. Warren retained five of the ablest barristers of the time. Three distinguished counsel appeared for the defendants, who held the court to the one simple issue : Whether the Special District Meeting which suspended Dr. Warren had by that act exceeded its powers according to the Constitution of Wesleyan Methodism. They maintained that it had not, and therefore that "the Court of Chancery had not the jurisdiction to interfere." The Vice-Chancellor decided that the Special District Meeting had not exceeded its powers as defined by the laws of Wesleyan Methodism, and therefore that there was nothing to call for or to justify the interference of the Court. He took occasion to acknowledge in glowing terms the great services which Methodism had rendered and was rendering to the religion of the country, its consequent importance to the nation, and the noble characters which had appeared within its pale. Dr. Warren forthwith appealed from the Vice-Chancellor to the Lord Chancellor.

**Did the Lord Chancellor's Judgment reverse or confirm that of the Vice-Chancellor ?**

After four days' delay, to enable the Lord Chancellor to master the facts of the case, the appeal was heard. It was an anxious and faith-trying moment for Methodism. If Dr. Warren had carried his case, the power of the Wesleyan-Methodist Pastorate to restrain a factious brother from the most divisive and destructive action, and to protect the flock of Christ under their charge, especially the Trustees of

chapels, from the disorderly courses of an unruly, self-asserting pastor, would have been at an end; the authority of the District Meeting, as locally representing Conference in the intervals of its sessions, would have been annihilated; and so closely interwoven is the whole system of Wesleyan Methodism, that the cutting of these strands would have unravelled the whole bond of Connexional unity. If the long-practised acuteness of Sir Charles Wetherell, Mr. Knight Bruce (afterwards a Lord Justice), Mr. Kindersley (afterwards a Vice-Chancellor), or of Mr. Parker could have found a flaw or picked a hole in the texture of the Wesleyan-Methodist system of discipline—could have proved it inconsistent with itself, unworkable, or at variance with the fundamental principles of equity, it would, for practical purposes, have become a rope of sand. This is what Dr. Warren hoped to accomplish. And considering how incidental and, so to speak, from hand to mouth, Conference legislation had been, and how its successive accretions had been brought together, and the way in which the usages and precedents which constituted what may be called the common law of Methodism had been in process of formation for well-nigh a hundred years, the clever Doctor of Laws might well promise himself a not improbable triumph. The legal ability and experience, combined with the straightforward English common-sense, of Vice-Chancellor Shadwell had torn to pieces the plausible rhetoric in which it had been attempted to veil the real point at issue. But now the case was to be laid before Lord Lyndhurst, the most powerful judicial mind of the age. It soon became plain that he had made good use of the intervening days in mastering the merits of the case, yet he took the utmost care to verify every important statement on either side. If a deed or other document were cited, he ordered it to be produced, and examined it with the utmost care. He so siftingly questioned Mr. Rolfe (afterwards Lord Chancellor Cranworth), the second counsel for the defence, that the proceedings took the form of interlocutions, or an animated colloquy, and many feared that the Lord Chancellor was prepossessed against the case. This occupied nearly a whole day. In this way all the most significant facts were elicited: the origin of Methodism; the object which Wesley had in view, and the means he had taken to accomplish that object; the first rudimentary organization of the United Societies; the constitution of the Conference; the rapid expansion of the Body; and the gradual shaping of the system. All these were, step by step, brought out. So thoroughly was this done that at the close Lord Lyndhurst jocularly observed to Mr. Rolfe: “You’ll get me into **Full Connexion!**”

And it would be well if every candidate for ordination were as able to pass an examination as to Wesleyan-Methodist polity and history as Lord Lyndhurst showed himself to be.

Lord Lyndhurst took four more days to consider and prepare his judgment. He was admitted to be the most masterly summer-up in England. His judicial and parliamentary summings-up were a national study. His judgment on this case is worthy of his fame. He began by endorsing the Vice-Chancellor's high estimate of the importance of the question, as affecting not only individual interests, but also those of a great religious Community. He next passed on to an encomium on the fine Christian spirit breathed by the *Minutes of Conference*, which it had been his duty to examine, and on the "objects," "motives" and "feelings" with which the Society had been constituted. He then, like the Vice-Chancellor, put his finger on the real point to be decided: "Whether or not Dr. Warren has been legally suspended from his functions as a minister by the District Committee. . . First, have the District Committee power to suspend a preacher? And if the District Committee have the power so to suspend, have they regularly exercised that power in the present instance?" He answered both these questions with an emphatic affirmative. He took the same broad, just view of the case which the Vice-Chancellor had taken: "That the case could not be settled merely by looking at the words of the Trust Deed." Those words "must be looked at and construed with reference to the whole machinery by which the great body of Wesleyan Methodists is kept together, and by which Methodism itself is carried on." This necessarily brought "the whole machinery" of Methodism under review. That it should be able to sustain such a searching scrutiny, considering the way in which it had been put together, at "odd times," and by a variety of unskilled hands, cannot but draw from a devout, believing mind a recognition of a supervision and direction higher than that of man: "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

#### Was there any ambiguity in the Lord Chancellor's decision?

No. The judgment was decisive: "Upon these two grounds merely, the regularity of the proceedings, and being satisfied with the authority of the Body, I am bound to affirm the decision of the Vice-Chancellor."

Moreover, the Lord Chancellor of England felt it his duty to pronounce, from his high tribunal, a severe rebuke of the intemperate

language and of the unmannerly personalities in which Dr. Warren had indulged, as grossly unbecoming a Christian minister in the discussion of a Church-question.

### What was the gain to Wesleyan Methodism of this decision ?

Only those Methodists who at that date were of an age and in a position to form some idea of the magnitude and moment of the interests involved can realize the relief which this decision brought to our menaced Methodism. The whole Connexion had held its breath in prayerful suspense. And at first the sense of relief prevented the Connexion, which saw itself saved from chaos, from estimating the substantial gains which this double decision had conferred upon Wesleyan Methodism. First of all, it assured to Wesleyan Methodism an undisturbed self-government, as a self-organizing, self-contained, self-controlling association ; securing to it the right to make its own laws, and to make them effective in every individual case ; protecting it from any interference of Law-court or of State with its legislation or the regular administration of its economy. It declared Methodism to be not only a *religio licita*, under the protection of the Act of Toleration, but a legally recognised institute, and factor in the religious life of the Empire, of which the peace, order, well-being, and well-working must not be at the mercy of self-asserting individuals.

Another most important gain was the assuring to the united Pastorate the power of exercising all necessary discipline over its own members.

Sir Charles Wetherell had endeavoured to apply to Wesleyan-Methodist ministers what Bishop Wilberforce called "the freehold theory," as applied to a Clergyman of the Established Church, which the Bishop truly said was fatal to all effective Clerical discipline ; namely, that a Clergyman's "living" is his freehold, of which no disregard or resistance of Church authority can ever deprive him. This claim as set up for a Wesleyan-Methodist minister was shattered by the decision of the Vice-Chancellor and Lord Chancellor ; it showed that a man can only continue to hold the position and privileges of a Wesleyan-Methodist minister so long as he observes the conditions on which he received them. It showed that the man who cannot subordinate his theories and his personal predilections generally to the peace and order of a great Connexion of Churches is neither fit for, nor worthy of, a place in its Ministry.

Dr. Warren, by bringing his case into the Court of Chancery, rendered Methodism an immense, though undesigned, service. And

it must be borne in mind that it was not the Conference or the Connexion that brought the matter before the secular Court ; it was Dr. Warren and his partisans.\*

### How did Dr. Warren conduct himself after the trial ?

Dr. Warren's subsequent conduct was very singular. He took his place in Conference as if nothing extraordinary had occurred. In the usual course of business the Minutes of the Manchester Special District Meeting were submitted to the Conference. Although he had given no notice of appeal against its decision, according to the usage and the propriety in such cases, he nevertheless claimed to be heard against it. This was granted, "not of right or justice, but of indulgence." Mr. Bromley was also heard on the same side. Dr. Warren, who was heard at full length, refused to express any regret for the course which he had pursued since his suspension. The sentence of expulsion was carried unanimously ; Mr. Bromley, after defending his own part in the matter, assenting to the judgment. Dr. Warren replied to the President's announcement of his sentence by a menace that he should do his "best to recover" the position of which he regarded himself as "unjustly deprived."

Dr. Warren's agitation resulted in a secession of about a thousand members, under the designation **Wesleyan Methodist Association**. At first the dissentients adopted the policy of "No secession ;" hence the name selected : **Wesleyan Methodist Association**. They resolved to try first the utmost power of internal agitation. A considerable number of members of this "**Grand Central**," or **Wesleyan Methodist Association** met in Sheffield during the sessions of the Conference there in 1835. They gave themselves the name of "delegates," and applied for admission into Conference to state and argue their case, or for the appointment of a select deputation of members of the Conference to confer with them. To this the Conference replied that they could not recognize a body of self-styled "delegates," without any authorization from any "Church or Society, or even one collective body of Trustees in the whole kingdom ;" the assembly "delusively" called "delegates" being, in fact, but an adjourned meeting of the **Grand Central Association**, for bringing the Conference to unconstitutional terms by annihilating the Connexional

\* It is only fair to remember that Mr. Rolfe (Lord Cranworth) and the other counsel for the defence could hardly have mastered the minutiae of the case if they had not enjoyed the advantage of the profound familiarity with Methodism possessed by the solicitor for the Trustees, Mr. T. Percival Bunting.

Funds. This was palpably the real case. Mr. George Cookman, the Chairman of the Liverpool meeting of the Association, was also Chairman of the meeting of the self-styled "delegates." The Conference declared its resolution not to hold any intercourse with the said **Grand Central Association**, although it was ready "at all times to receive, with the most respectful attention, the friendly communications or suggestions of any member of their Societies on topics relating to the great and vital interests of the Connexion."

The seceders wisely coalesced with the **Protestant Methodists**, with whose Church-theories they were in accord. Dr. Warren soon found his position in the new Body so uncongenial that he obtained episcopal ordination, was presented to the incumbency of a district church in Manchester, and passed the rest of his life in obscurity.

**Was Wesleyan Methodism permanently injured by this secession?**

No; it was soon recouped for the losses thus sustained. In 1836 the net increase was more than two thousand.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

"EXPLANATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS." — THE "WATCHMAN" NEWSPAPER.—ORDINATION.—THE CENTENARY CELEBRATION.—RENEWED AGITATION.—THE FLY-SHEETS, ETC.

**Did the Conference make any Changes on the defeat of Dr. Warren and his party?**

The Conference of 1835 wisely resolved to cut the ground from under the feet of the agitators by making "explanations and improvements" with regard to the administration of Finance and Discipline. These "explanations and improvements" it embodied in a judicious document entitled: *Special Address of the Conference to the Wesleyan-Methodist Societies*, which was issued in addition to the annual Pastoral Address. As to finance, the statement opens thus: "The Conference has long felt it to be both just and expedient, and to themselves, as a body of Christian Ministers, exceedingly agreeable, that the active management of the Financial Affairs of the Connexion, whether local or general, should be undertaken, as far as possible, by laymen." This was henceforth an axiom of Wesleyan Methodism. It then showed: 1. "That this principle has always obtained as

to the far largest amount of Methodist finance," the Circuit Funds. 2. That the Connexional Funds are under the management of Committees of ministers and laymen, namely, the Missionary Fund, the General Chapel Fund, and the School Fund; and that the ministerial element in these Committees is indispensable to the good practical working of the several Funds, inasmuch as the ministers "obviously possess a more intimate and personal acquaintance with the circumstances and necessities of our work in its varied relations and mutual bearings, and in its now widely extended field of operation, than local men, however able and devoted; and it would not be equitable or reasonable to demand that those whose influence and activity are mainly relied upon for procuring pecuniary support to our Institutions, and whose individual and ministerial character is therefore pledged to the public for the right application of the Funds which they are employed to advocate and maintain, should be systematically excluded from the Committees to which those Funds are confided." The people were then reminded that by far the larger portion of the CONTINGENT FUND—that which was applied to "ordinary deficiencies"—was under the joint control of ministers and laymen at the Financial District Meeting, of which the two Circuit Stewards of every Circuit were members. It was now, however, resolved that the part of the Fund set apart for "extraordinary deficiencies" should be placed under the management of a Committee of ministers and laymen, as should also the only remaining fund: the Preachers' Auxiliary Fund.

The necessities of the Connexion are the justification, as they are the occasion, of the occupation of Methodist ministers with collections and subscriptions.

### Cannot this necessity be obviated ?

Not unless and until laymen can be found who both can and will look after the maintaining and the increase of the Connexional Funds as ministers are now obliged to do.

### What was the Origin of the "Watchman" newspaper ?

As the *Christian Advocate* continued to attack the Conference and the distinctive polity of Wesleyan Methodism, it was felt to be necessary to establish an organ of defence. Hence originated the *Watchman*. Its purpose, as set forth in its prospectus, was "especially to uphold and defend, as occasion may require, the principles and economy of Wesleyan Methodism, as settled by its venerable founder and by the Conference since his decease." To this mission it was faithful through a

course of fifty years. It was not the organ of a political party taking advantage of the prestige of Wesleyan Methodism.

### Were any disciplinary regulations made in 1835 ?

Yes. As to the **expulsion of members**, it was declared that whilst the **verdict** in the case of an accused member of the Society should still be found by the Leaders of that Society, the **sentence** should be determined by the Superintendent. This was quite as much in the interest of the convicted party as in that of the purity and order of the Church. This safeguard was "essential to the protection of an accused individual from the effects of personal prejudice or irritation, or of popular excitement and undue local influence." As a matter of fact, a Superintendent, for the most part, takes a much more lenient view of the case of an accused person than does the majority of a Leaders' Meeting. But it was now enacted that before pronouncing the sentence of expulsion the Superintendent should take a week for "full inquiry" and "for calm and careful deliberation," and further that "every case of proposed expulsion shall be brought by the Superintendent before the weekly meeting of the Preachers of his circuit."

The right of appeal to the District Meeting and the Conference was reaffirmed. But now, in order to make the remedy for supposed unjust expulsion "sufficiently prompt and easy," any member of the Society could demand a **Minor District Meeting** on his case, and the selection of two out of the four members of the meeting. In cases of extraordinary difficulty or apparent hardship, a complainant might claim a rehearing before a **Special District Meeting**, consisting of all the Ministers in the District in full connexion and of four Ministers of circuits in any other district, two chosen by the complainant and two by his own Superintendent. It was thus sought to secure members of the Society from "the possibility of rash or unwarrantable expulsion." This was also the remedy against a Leaders' Meeting "refusing to give any verdict at all" on the case of an accused member, and against the supposed "prejudice or severity" of a Superintendent.

An earnest endeavour was also put forth to encourage and elicit peaceable and constitutional communications to the Conference as to existing regulations which might be thought to need amending, or additional regulations which might be deemed desirable. It was enacted: "After the final close of the June Quarterly Meeting in every year, the Superintendent shall detain the Circuit Stewards and all the Society Stewards who may be present, and ascertain from them whether there really exists in **that circuit** a general or a considerable

dissatisfaction with any of our existing rules, or a prevalent and earnest desire for the enactment of any additional regulations." If "any considerable proportion" of the Stewards be of opinion "that the wish for alteration is strong and extensive, and that the matter is of sufficient importance to justify the calling of a Special Circuit Meeting," the Superintendent is directed to summon one "with due and sufficient notice." The constitution of this meeting was then defined. It was made widely inclusive. Perfect freedom of discussion and of **motion** was guaranteed to such meeting as to all "such changes as are consistent with the general principles of Wesleyan Methodism, and within the pale of our established constitution." "The disciplinary jurisdiction of the Preachers over each other" was not to be interfered with, and no one circuit was allowed to intermeddle with the affairs of another.

### What did the new provisions betoken?

These provisions indicated an earnest desire on the part of Conference to be **in touch** with the people, and to ascertain, in order to authorize, their views and wishes so far as they were accordant with the foundation principles of Wesleyan Methodism. At the same time, it was resolved to issue a "revised and improved edition of the *Form of Discipline*," and thus make the Constitution and the Rules of Wesleyan Methodism patent and accessible to all.

### Was any change made with regard to the Pastorate?

The Conference of 1836 decided on the **ordination** of Wesleyan Ministers **by imposition of hands**. They had already been ordained, to all intents and purposes, "by the **hands** of the presbytery," but only by the **lifting up** of their hands. Henceforth they were to be ordained by the **laying on** as well as by the lifting up of their hands. It is well known that the verb rendered "**laying on of hands**" primarily means "**lifting up of hands**." In the lately discovered *Teaching of the Apostles*, it is the word used for the **choice of the Church**. Wesleyan Methodist missionaries had been ordained in both ways for some years before. By this step Wesleyan Methodism simply brought itself into harmony with primitive Christian usage, and with that of its sister-Churches. It is certain also that the abstaining from this all but universal custom of the Church was interpreted by many as an admission of the want of true ministerial orders. It was full time that this simple and significant ceremony, which adds so much to the solemnity and impressiveness of ordination, should be adopted by the

Connexion. The moment was most seasonable, giving to the institution a double aspect, expressive in each direction. On the one side, it was a firm reply, by anticipation, to the revived and re-emphasized claims of diocesan Episcopacy to the monopoly of ordination, made by the Tractarian Churchmen at Oxford, then just beginning their crusade; on the other, it was a quiet assertion of the pastoral standing, responsibilities, and functions, which had been successfully defended against democratic theory and agitation.

### What was the next great event in the history of Methodism?

In 1838-9 "the winter of our discontent," the season of recurrent Connexional agitation and embroilment, when the clouds returned after the rain, was "made glorious summer" by the centenary celebration of Methodism. Seldom has an idea been better conceived, or more wisely, enthusiastically, and effectively carried out. The determining of the true date of the origin of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion was of great importance. This was rightly seen to be the date of the origination of the class-meeting as an experience meeting, and the formation of the United Societies—in 1738-9. A happy judiciousness was also shown in the constitution of the Committee for considering the best mode of celebrating the centenary of that epoch. It consisted of an equal number of Ministers and laymen. The larger meeting convened at Manchester also consisted of Ministers and laymen. That meeting must be for ever famous in the annals of Christian liberality as inaugurating a new era in Church-giving. At that meeting a higher standard of giving was reached, and a nobler style of giving was all at once initiated. An afflatus of grateful generosity came down upon the meeting from the opened heaven. All felt "the greater blessedness of giving," and felt a "gladness and singleness of heart" like that of the Church of Pentecost, a "blessedness" like that of the Galatian converts. It took Methodism, the other Churches, and the nation by surprise. Up to that time very crude and narrow, but by no means primitive, notions of giving had prevailed since the time of the Crusades. The demonstration in the Manchester Methodist chapel, when manufacturers gave their thousands, and the great campaign of liberality which was then opened, told even on the Vatican. The Pope, in an Encyclical, called the attention of the Catholic Church to the fact that these "heretics" were putting to shame the dribbled offerings of the faithful. Since that time, the sister-Churches, aroused by this example, have made such swift advances on the same royal road, that Methodism will

assuredly have to put "its best foot forward" if it would retain the hegemony in the warfare against stinginess and selfishness.

Prophecy gives, as one grand result of the outpouring of the Spirit, a lofty public standard of liberality: "The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl be said to be bountiful." This Pentecostal feature has become much more prominent during the last fifty years.

### **Had the centenary celebration any other good effect?**

Another happy effect of the centenary celebration was the recalling of the Methodist mind to the first and the essential principles of Methodism, as the Christianity of experience and fellowship. Nothing was more remarkable in the centenary meetings throughout the land than the naturalness with which the givers fell into a narrative of their religious experience. The Committee of Ways and Means forthwith became a lovefeast, and each contribution seemed the logical deduction from the confession of a Christian disciple. The connection between the fellowship of Methodism and the finance of Methodism has from the beginning been intimate and vital. In this case, at any rate, the givings were not determined "by the book of arithmetic," or as a tax upon religious respectability. In the immense majority of cases all was spontaneity and freeness. Hence the petty prodigies of earlier giving were left far behind. Nearly a quarter of a million (£222,589) was put into the treasurer's hands. This example did much to stimulate the heroic liberality of the Free Church of Scotland three years afterwards.

### **To what purposes was this large sum devoted?**

The apportionment of this sum was most discreet and equitable. The first claimant was the Theological Institution, to which was assigned the sum of nearly £72,000. With this sum two "Institutions" were founded, furnished, and put into condition for immediate serviceability. They provided fit accommodation for a hundred students, and their governors and tutors, with library and chapel. One of them is finely situated on Richmond Hill, the other pleasantly posited between Manchester and Stockport. The Missionary Society received £70,000, by means of which a Mission House was secured in the very heart of the metropolis, with dimensions bearing some proportion to the magnitude of the work. A Missionary ship was purchased, with three years' supply of stores; £6,000 were voted

for Mission Schools and schoolmasters and for houses in Ireland, and £5,000 towards the erection of a Centenary Memorial Chapel in Dublin ; £11,000 went to the discharge of Mission debt, and £5,000 were devoted to Mission chapels ; more than £16,000 formed the nucleus of an "Auxiliary" Fund towards an increase of the pinching allowances of Worn-out Ministers and Ministers' widows ; £5,700 cleared off the lingering debt on the estate at Woodhouse Grove, £40,000 were applied to the relief of debt-burdened chapels, more than £5,000 to the Wesleyan Education Fund, and £1,000 was contributed to the British and Foreign Bible Society.

### What event or agency broke this peace and harmony ?

Such was the enthusiastic harmony of the Centenary celebration that even the Rev. James Everett, the most active literary opponent of the Theological Institution, and the strongest sympathizer with the seceders of 1829 and 1835 to be found in the Wesleyan Methodist ministry, contributed £20 at the Manchester meeting to the Centenary Fund, burnt "between fourteen and fifteen hundred copies of *The Disputants*," a pamphlet in which he had attacked the scheme, and at the Newcastle meeting two months afterwards declared his full approval of the Institution, and his conviction that "ample security was given" for its well-working "in the excellent men to whose wisdom and piety its concerns were confided."

About a year after the close of the Centenary year, there appeared an anonymous volume entitled *Wesleyan Takings; or, Sketches of Ministerial Character as exhibited in the Wesleyan Connexion*. This contained pen-and-ink portraits of many of the best-known Wesleyan Methodist Ministers. Sketches of this kind had appeared before ; but they had all been genial, kindly, inoffensive, for example those of Mr. Robert West. But many of these *Takings* were **takings-off**—caustic, depreciative, ungenial, bringing into special prominence, and pointing out to the public gaze, the infelicitous pulpit mannerisms and the defects, educational and other, of some of the best and most useful men in Methodism, in such wise as seriously to disconcert and embarrass sensitive men in their public ministrations and to wantonly lower them in the eyes of their people and the public generally.

As this clever literary disservice to Methodist Ministers and their flocks was obviously the work of some member of the Brotherhood, the book was condemned by the Conference as unbrotherly in spirit and mischievous in tendency. Neither the plea : "Am I not in sport ?"

nor the skilfulness of the performance were allowed to condone its flippant rudenesses.

But this anonymous volume was followed in 1846, 1847, and 1848 by a direct and deadly attack on the leading Ministers of the Connexion. This was made by a series of anonymous tracts called *Fly-sheets*, which, under cover of criticism of the administration of Methodism, assailed the private character, and invaded the domestic sanctities, of the most distinguished Methodist Ministers, and that in so consciously criminal a style that no publisher or printer dared put his name to it; and the manoeuvre of evading the testimony of a postmark had to be again resorted to. Mr. Kilham's and Dr. Warren's unworthy personalities and imputation of bad motives were outdone. These were sent to Wesleyan Methodist Ministers in Full Connexion, and to others. Their chief plausibility consisted in their assault upon "**Centralization.**" In 1848 these missives were collected into a volume and made accessible to the laity generally, and became the subjects of eager and excited discussion amongst our Local-preachers, Leaders, and Stewards.

### **What was the effect of the "Fly-sheets"?**

The result was the shattering or shaking of the confidence of thousands in the administration of Methodism. Never was a plot for sowing "discord among brethren" more deeply laid or more assiduously worked. These unfathered productions professed to be the composition of a committee; but they bore the unquestionable marks of individual authorship.

### **How was it that they produced such an effect?**

It was the anonymous personalities and defamations of the *Fly-sheets* which at once aggravated and complicated the matter. Even at the date of the Centenary celebration, a considerable number of the ablest and most loyal Ministers and laymen thought that Dr. Bunting's predominant influence ought to be held in check. Indeed, early in the wonderful career of that wonderful man some of the oldest and most influential men in Conference made no secret of their feeling that his great powers and untiring attention to Connexional affairs gave him undue predominance in the counsels and administration of Methodism. But his unrivalled powers as a debater as well as an ecclesiastical statesman bore down opposition. It would be a great mistake to suppose that there was ever in the Conference any real repression of freedom of speech. The debates in Conference were

always lively as well as solid. And there was no lack of speaking power. But, alike in Conference and in Committee, Jabez Bunting towered above his brethren, the great majority of whom were proud of his powers, and believed in his principles and policy.

Any notion that a man by speaking in Conference or Committee against the views of Dr. Bunting or the measures which he supported ran any real risk of Connexional disadvantage or disability was contradicted by the most patent facts. No man was one whit the less likely to be invited to a superior Circuit on that account, or if invited to be appointed to any such Circuit. Of Dr. Bunting's most prominent opponents, Jacob Stanley was elected to the Presidency in 1845, and William Atherton in 1846, and Joseph Fowler was Secretary of the Conference in 1848. Daniel Isaac, Thomas Galland, and Joseph Beaumont took our highest Circuits. The rest were stationed where they were invited. As to Circuits and Connexional honours, every one was sure, sooner or later, to find his level. The only instance in which Dr. Bunting was ever known to betray chagrin at the carrying of measures of which he had expressed his disapproval was at the Conference of 1844, when he occupied the chair for the fourth time, a distinction which had not fallen to the lot of any other man. At one sitting of that Conference three important resolutions were carried, in immediate succession, against his known views, two of them against his strongly expressed and earnestly reasoned judgment. This was proof positive that the Conference had a will and convictions of its own. Dr. Beaumont and Mr. Dunn exercised their freedom of speech, the one with brilliant intrepidity, the other with determined pertinacity. At the Missionary Committee of Review any Minister or layman had full liberty of animadversion, interrogation, criticism. In 1848, Mr. Sharpley, of Louth, used this liberty in a most marked manner, without interruption from any other members, and without check from the chair. If the author of the *Fly-sheets* had chosen, he had ample opportunity of putting all his points from his place in Conference, nothing being wanting to him but frankness, manliness, and fidelity. Dr. Beaumont told him so. He asked: "Why can't you do as I do? Why don't you come to Conference, and out with it?" To which the reply was: "Oh, my forte is not debate." And yet this same Minister had at that time an imposing presence, iron nerves, an effective elocution and address, and a taking, popular, and remarkably incisive style, with store of illustrative citation at his fingers' ends. His physique would have given great advantages in debate. He was much in request for

“occasional” sermons and speeches, and in the houses in which he was entertained showed no lack of fluency in commenting on Conference measures and Conference men. But, as he said, open discussion was not his “forte.”

As to the authorship of the *Fly-sheets*, it is vain to affect the slightest doubt. Although the Rev. James Everett never publicly either avowed or denied that authorship, his biographer claims it for him as indubitable, and without a rival. No one who knew the man and his style and read the *Sheets* could have a moment's doubt upon the matter.

Dr. Bunting at the Conference of 1849, when the question was put : “Are there any objections to **Jabez Bunting** ?” arose in his place, and declared not only his willingness, but also his wish, to forego all formality, and to be put upon his trial at once, if any man would step forward and frankly charge him with any one of the evils alleged against him in the *Fly-sheets*. No one was able to bring forward any evidence in support of any one of the many injurious allegations so industriously and insidiously circulated.

Mr. Everett had already issued three anonymous publications : *The Disputants*, *The Wesleyan Takings*, and a pamphlet which he himself thus describes : “a poetical satire, strung with stinging notes,” entitled *A Cure for Critics, occasioned by the Conduct of some Wesleyan Would-Bee's, illustrated with Notes from Well-authenticated Reports and Floating Anecdotes respecting the Parties*. The gentlemen thus covertly attacked on the ground of “reports” and “floating anecdotes” were members of his own flock at the time in Newcastle-on-Tyne (Chew's *Life of Everett*, p. 305). Mr. Chew admits that “the production is more stinging than elegant, more satirical than poetical.”

**Had Mr. Everett any fellow-labourers in the work of agitation ?**

Mr. Everett had two coadjutors : Samuel Dunn and William Griffith.

**What was Mr. Dunn's course ?**

The case of Mr. Dunn was widely different from that of Mr. Everett. It came before the Conference in the most regular way. “At the annual meeting of the Nottingham and Derby District Committee, charges were preferred against Mr. Dunn to the effect that, by the publication of a periodical entitled *The Wesley Banner*, he had contravened the laws and usages of the Connexion, endangered its peace, and aspersed the character of a large majority of its

Ministers. This publication is dividing our people, of which we have some painful instances in this District." They thereupon recommended Mr. Dunn to accept a proposition that the charges against him should be withdrawn on condition that the periodical should at once be given up. But this recommendation, though strongly and affectionately urged upon him by almost every Minister in the Meeting, he positively declined to accept. The District Committee therefore resolved that *The Wesley Banner* ought to be discontinued, and required Mr. Dunn immediately to suspend its publication. He again refused to do this, and appealed to the Conference against the proceedings of the Committee. The Conference received the appeal, and appointed a Committee to hear it. But when the Committee met, Mr. Dunn declined to appear; and as he thus declined to prosecute his appeal, the Conference unanimously resolved to "confirm the decision of the District Committee in his case." Mr. Dunn also refused to answer any question as to the authorship of the *Fly-sheets*. Mr. Dunn and Mr. Griffith addressed a joint letter to the President, declaring that they "were not prepared to submit to the conditions on which their continued connexion with the Conference was made to depend."

#### What course did Mr. Griffith take?

The case of Mr. Griffith was complicated with those of Mr. Everett and Mr. Dunn. Mr. Griffith refused either to answer the question put to him by the President as to his having any active connection with the production of the *Fly-sheets*, or to desist from attacking the measures of Conference in the *Wesley Banner* and the *Wesleyan Times*. Mr. Griffith had, in his own and the neighbouring Circuits, most effectively propagated discontent with the administration of Methodism, and distrust of its most influential Ministers. His political tenets, which were avowedly Republican, formed a prominent part of his preaching, which was calculated to excite class against class, labour against capital. He would "not submit to conditions" which were absolutely necessary to the peaceable prosecution of his work as a Wesleyan Methodist Minister. No hand was uplifted in Conference against the sentence of expulsion.

Mr. Griffith, like Mr. Stephens, had imbibed the spirit of the then rampant Chartism.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

## EXPULSION OF MESSRS. EVERETT, DUNN, AND GRIFFITH.

**What means were taken to check the divisive action of Messrs. Everett, Dunn, and Griffith?**

The Brotherhood of Wesleyan Methodist Ministers availed themselves of their right to question a member of their Body of whom it was impossible not to be morally certain that he was covertly attacking the character of his brethren. As to Mr. Everett the point is very simple. There was no denying that some member of the Methodist Brotherhood was so bent upon carrying the Church-measures of which he approved, and the large majority of his brethren did not approve, that he did not scruple to resort to means so anti-social and so criminal as to bring him, if detected, within the punitive grasp of the law of the land. Had the Conference the right to find out the offender? And if internal and circumstantial evidence pointed clearly and strongly to one particular man, was he to be allowed to continue his mischievous practices whilst still retaining his status and his pecuniary receipts as a Wesleyan Methodist Minister? The supposition is absurd. Happily the rules and usages of the Methodist Connexion provided the means of unearthing such an underminer. There was no other way of gripping a man who was capable of writing and circulating the *Fly-sheets*. The exercise of the right of questioning was called un-English, with reference to the principle of British law not to require an accused person to say anything which might incriminate himself; but almost immediately after these proceedings it was found necessary to greatly modify this principle in the interests of justice and of mercy to the public; and Mr. Justice Stephen strongly pleads for still further facilitating the detection of a subtle criminal or of a well-concealed conspiracy.

The right of the Brotherhood of Methodist Ministers to ask one of its members, against whom there lay suspicion little short of formal proof, **point blank** as to his authorship, was perfectly certain, and their right and duty to deal with him according to the best of thier judgment on his resolute refusal to clear himself was equally plain. It is vain to insist upon conclusive formal evidence against a man whom everybody believed to be the manufacturer of moral dynamite, and to have hid it beneath the Downing Street of Methodist administration. The very individuals who protested against Mr. Everett's

being obliged to clear himself of the inevitable and universal suspicion of a gross breach of Methodist law and Christian charity and social neighbourliness, yet demanded that the Ministers whose talents and services to Methodism had been most conspicuous should be at once put upon their trial, on the ground of anonymous charges which no one would step forward to sustain.

The right of enquiry into the conduct of each individual Minister on the part of the assembled Brotherhood is an integral and essential part of Wesleyan Methodism. Without a brotherly unreserve the Pastorate of Methodism cannot hold together.

**But was the course so clear in the case of Mr. Dunn and Mr. Griffith?**

As to Mr. Dunn, the question is twofold. 1. Had the Conference the right to require him to discontinue the publication of a periodical one leading object of which was to make the Methodist people dissatisfied with the measures, arrangements, and appointments of Conference; and to insist upon his discontinuing his contributions to another serial of which the avowed and determined purpose was the same? Assuredly, the Wesleyan Methodist Pastoral Brotherhood had this right. 2. When Mr. Dunn set at defiance the authority of his assembled Brethren in these respects, and maintained towards them the attitude of hostile individualism, were they bound to submit to him, because he would not submit to them? Clearly not.

Mr. Griffith's case was similar. The answer to the one carries the answer to the other. He would not engage to abstain in the future from the assiduous attempts which he had been making in the past, both by voice and by pen, in public and in private, to represent the Brotherhood of which he was a member as unworthy of the confidence of their people; because certain of their measures, arrangements, and appointments were not such as he and those who thought with him could approve.

They definitively refused to give their Brethren any "security for their abstinence in future from the divisive and agitating measures which they have recently pursued." They also "refused to submit to the brotherly enquiry deemed by the Conference to be absolutely necessary." The Conference, therefore, felt itself **shut up** to the expulsion from its brotherhood of any member who claimed the right to disregard its authority, and to maintain a literary organ for the purpose of appealing to the public against any of its decisions which did not accord with his personal views.

We do not know that Mr. Dunn ever **publicly** disavowed all complicity with the *Fly-sheets*. But this he did most explicitly and earnestly to two Wesleyan Ministers in after years.

### What was the course taken by the expelled Ministers?

They began a public agitation without a day's delay. Mr. Griffith addressed a meeting in Manchester on the evening of the day on which he received the official notification of his severance from the body of Wesleyan Methodist Ministers. An organized agitation was kept up with the utmost vehemence for more than five years; the watchwords being: "No Surrender; No Secession; No Supplies." The policy was to remain in the Connexion for the purpose of forcing it into the shape which the agitators desired; but meanwhile not a penny was to be contributed either to the Connexional Funds or to the support of the ministry whose ministrations were still enjoyed. It took the name of "the Reform movement;" its announced objects were the following:—1. The rescinding of the declaratory law of 1835, which embodied the original right of the Brethren, in District Meeting and Conference, to require from each other full mutual frankness as to facts of grave importance to the prosperity of the work, which yet were of such a nature that they could not be made matters of formal charge. The purpose of this law was to prevent an unbrotherly brother from indefinitely defaming the Brotherhood, and destroying the peace and coherence of the Connexion by stealthy operations, and by entrenching himself behind the forms of Criminal Law and demanding the evidence which he had craftily rendered unproducible. 2. The next point demanded was the unrestricted admission of the public to the confidential and privileged deliberations of the supreme Church-court: "Conference with open doors." 3. The appointment of Laymen only, as treasurers of the Connexional Funds, not Laymen and Ministers conjointly. 4. The right of any local Quarterly Meeting, Leaders' Meeting, or other recognized Meeting not only of managing its own affairs and expressing its judgment on any new regulation proposed by Conference, but to the unrestricted discussion of all Connexional matters, and of a corporate representation of its views on all such matters to Conference. 5. The choosing by ballot all the members of all the Connexional Committees. 6. The appointment of "a large and independent" Commission to enquire into the management of all "the Connexional Funds as far back as the Commission may deem necessary." To these demands

was added, as of prime importance, the unconditional reinstatement of the expelled Ministers.

### Could the policy of the agitators be justified ?

There is happily no further need to discuss the *morale* of the policy deliberately adopted and persistently carried on by the leaders of the agitation. Two of the foremost men in the Methodist Free Church—Mr. Chew, the biographer of James Everett and of William Griffith and Mr. Kirsop, the historian of the “Methodist Free Churches”—have abandoned the defence of two of the principles and watchwords of the movement: “No Secession” and “No Supplies.” These are admitted to have been, “if not sins, yet certainly *blunders*.” The former was “an error of judgment” (Chew’s *William Griffith*, p. 90). “The movement was continued too long as an agitating force. . . Had the work of formation been distinctly and earnestly begun at an earlier period, before the strength and freshness of the agitation began to abate, and had a new denomination been established, combining several or all of the liberal sections of Methodism, a new organization would have arisen with augmented means and quickened impulse.” “The cry of ‘Stop the Supplies,’ while enjoying the privileges of the Wesleyan Connexion, was running the risk of encouraging a feeling in human nature which is usually strong enough without being stimulated; to withhold from the cause of God is a lesson easier to learn than to unlearn. But the leaders of the movement did not intend to promote selfishness; they tried to divert the money into other channels” (*ibid.*).

“They tried to divert the money into other channels.” In plain words, they tried to divert the sums heretofore contributed to the support of a separated and unendowed ministry, by those who still availed themselves of their ministrations, to the carrying on of a desperate attempt to coerce those Ministers into a course condemned by their own judgment and conscience. This attempt was not abandoned until “funds for carrying on the Reform agitation were running short” (Chew’s *Griffith*, p. 93). Mr. Kirsop gives the *Fly-sheets* their right name: “Anonymous attacks on character” (*Historic Sketches of Free Methodism*, p. 40). He says frankly: “I am not anxious to defend the *Fly-sheets*. I condemn anonymous attacks on character.” As to the cry: “Stop the Supplies,” Mr. Kirsop confesses. “Certainly it is doubtful whether such a policy can be justified on the part of those who seek to continue in the Church. At all events, it failed in its design.”

As to the character of the constitutional changes demanded by the agitation, we need only instance the unexceptionable testimony of two of the most liberal-minded men that ever entered the Wesleyan Methodist ministry: George Steward and Joseph Fowler. The former subsequently became an Independent Minister. In a remarkable book published in August, 1850, *Religion, the Weal of the Church*, etc., he concludes his chapter on **Methodism** with the following weighty words :—

“Whenever, as **now**, new or modified combinations are sought for, **the births of speculation are as sudden as they are numerous; the sobrieties of practical suggestion are liable to be set aside. These offer no stimulant in comparison with the blandishments of idealism;** but this fact suggests the seasonableness of such (sober and practical) suggestions. The right **direction** and **working** of Methodism are of primary consequence; its **genius** rather than its details is to be seized and transmitted; nor can it value as fealty **whatever would eschew the facts of its history or invalidate its pledges to the world.**”

For Mr. Fowler's testimony see *Life of Dr. Bunting*, pp. 707, 708.

### What was the result of the five years' agitation?

The devastation caused by this agitation was such as can only be realized by those who witnessed it. Some of the finest and most flourishing Circuits in Methodism, where, in the cultivation of Christian fellowship and the prosecution of Christian activities, Methodism most nearly reached its true ideal, were all but wrecked. To one of their former Ministers, revisiting them after the catastrophe, they presented a spectacle to be compared with that which Paris presented after the siege and the Commune. The Third London (Spitalfields) lost, for example, nearly two thousand members. It has never recovered to this day. The Rochester Circuit, one of the loveliest Societies in the world, a proverb of fraternal affection and of respect for and loyalty to its Ministers, was made little better than “a ruinous heap.” At Yeadon, which had been so permeated and penetrated with Methodism, that it was a common saying in the place, “Everybody in Yeadon either is a Methodist or fully intends to be before he dies,” the Minister's house was attacked by a furious mob, and defended by physical force; and the heroic missionary Shrewsbury found himself and his family in greater danger than they had ever experienced from the slave-holders of the West Indies or the Kaffirs of the Cape. The late Right Hon. W. E. Forster, whose home was then in that village, described it as “the last Civil War that ever was fought in England

for the sake of religion." But the very virulence of the conflict arose out of the closeness and warmth of the disrupted relations for

"To be wroth with one we love  
Doth work like madness in the brain."

Seldom has there been a more devastating ecclesiastical earthquake. "A third part of the city" of Wesleyan Methodism "fell."

In many places where Methodism had struck its roots into the social soil, the popular passions were stirred to their turbid depths. The Connexion lost a hundred thousand members, not half of whom joined the new organization. The rest were "scattered on the hills as sheep that had no shepherd." Several of the most prominent lay-leaders of the movement soon left it, and joined Independent Churches. Mr. Dunn himself became an Independent Minister. Mr. Griffith was allowed to be in reality a Methodist Independent Minister, with a Church of his own in Derby, of which he continued the Pastor for nearly thirty years, to the day of his death.

### Did no Circuits escape?

In some of the Circuits, where discipline was carried out with the gentleness and forbearance of a nursing-father over a fever-stricken child, the mischief was comparatively small.

### Was not the agitation justifiable?

It was not.

No Minister or private member has a right to enter or remain in a Church the polity of which is not to his mind, for the purpose of shaping it to his own views by dint of continuous and vehement agitation. Wesley tells of a gentleman who desired membership in the United Societies, not because he agreed with them, but in order to bring them over to his own way of thinking, and who declared: "I will dispute." Wesley asked: "Why then would you come among us, who, you know, are of another mind?" The answer was: "Because you are all wrong, and I am resolved to set you right." Wesley: "I fear your coming with this view would neither profit you nor us." Mr. Acomb concluded: "Then I will go and tell all the world that you and your brother are false prophets. And I tell you, in one fortnight you will all be in confusion." To which Wesley quietly rejoined: "So be it if we do not preach the truth as it is in Jesus" (*Works*, xiii., 158, 159).

No brother must be allowed such an extreme of self-assertion as to disregard with impunity the declared judgment of his brethren, and to

disturb and disrupt the Church rather than abstain from a course which the Brotherhood believe to be incompatible with the peace, the well-working, and the well-being of the Church. Messrs. Dunn and Griffith claimed the right to have a literary organ of which an avowed object was to revise and censure decisions, arrangements, and appointments of the Conference of which they personally disapproved, and to call upon the people to compel the Conference to reverse such decisions, arrangements, and appointments. When they were excluded from the brotherhood for and by their own unbrotherly self-assertion, they, along with Mr. Everett, determined, at any cost of agitation, to ride back into the ranks of the same denounced brotherhood on the shoulders of an excited people. Several Congregationalist Ministers, one or two of the most distinguished, took the part of the expelled Ministers, avowedly because they thought the question was one of Independency against Connexionalism. Thus the Connexion was riddled between two fierce fires: the front fire of a malcontent minority and the cross-fire of unfriendly neighbours. In plain words, this was a determined attempt of a minority in the Conference and the Connexion to dominate the majority in both. Of course, they represented themselves as the majority all the time, and persuaded themselves, and laboured to persuade others, that they were.

**Was the agitation successful in the endeavour to starve the Conference into a surrender of its principles?**

No. The speed with which the Methodist funds recovered themselves was marvellous. The true dynamics of Church finance were brought to bear in an appeal to the gratitude and love of the people, first in the **Relief and Extension Fund** movement and then in the celebration of the Jubilee of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. Numerical recovery came more slowly by reason of the loss of so large a number of Leaders and Local-preachers.

It is most pleasing to record that Mr. Dunn and Mr. Griffith both survived all asperity towards the Church of their parentage, their education, their spiritual nativity, and their ordination vows. Mr. Dunn, in 1876, wrote to the Editor of the Magazine a letter full of tender memories of the dear old times. In 1878 Mr. Dunn journeyed from Brighton to Bradford in order to attend the public services of the Conference.\*

\* When it became known that the Hymn-book was to be revised and enlarged, Mr. Griffith at once communicated with one of the Connexional editors, express-

Mr. Griffith delighted in the peace and harmony of the Ecumenical Conference in City Road in 1881. He and others received the Communion from the hands of Dr. Osborn, the former standing, as they objected to the kneeling posture. Mr. Griffith exulted in the frank and earnest heartiness of his reception by all his old opponents, and his invitations to preach in Methodist chapels, and, above all, in the brotherly relations between himself and the Wesleyan Methodist Ministers of the Derby Circuit in which he resided, which were the sequence of that blessed gathering. He concludes his account of these amenities with the characteristic exclamation: "There's for you! Is the millennium at hand?"

The main body of seceders effected a junction with the **Wesleyan Methodist Association**, forming the **United Methodist Free Churches**. The constitution of the body differs from that of both the New Connexion and the Primitive Methodists. The relative proportion of Ministers and laymen in the Conference is not defined. The Circuits elect Representatives to Conference, ministerial or lay, official or unofficial, as they see fit. Yet the Conference has not a decisive jurisdiction over the Circuits. The Connexional principle, to a considerable extent, is modified by the Congregational. The community of Ministers is imperfect, the itinerancy being optional on the part of the Circuits. The aggregate of the two bodies, on their coming together in 1857, was reported as 41,000, a mournful minority of those who had been by three successive agitations detached from the parent-stem. The number of members returned in 1887, including those on trial and the Foreign Missions, was 84,935. We regret to find that the increase during the decade 1876 to 1886 has been very small. This fact is attributed by the leading minds of the Body to—1. "The decay of class-meetings," which "in some circuits are completely gone," and "in many others slowly dying." 2. "The lack of the evangelistic spirit." Hence "a decrease in the number of preaching-rooms and Local-preachers" during the same period (*Methodist Free Church Magazine*, August, 1886). The coincidence between "the decay of the class-meeting" and the "decrease in the number of preaching-rooms and Local-preachers" is significant and admonitory.

ing his deep interest in "May I still say, our Hymn-book?" and placing in his hands the documents relating to the edition of the Hymn-book which the Methodist Free Church had issued for their own use even before they formed themselves into a distinct Church, a Hymn-book which, next to our enlarged Hymn-book, is the best collection of hymns extant.

## CHAPTER XXIV

INCIDENTAL CAUSES OF THE AGITATION OF 1849.—EQUAL DEVELOPMENT OF PASTORAL AND POPULAR RIGHTS.—JABEZ BUNTING.

**How is the very great loss which resulted from the "Reform" agitation to be accounted for ?**

The main strength of the "Reform" agitation, like that of foregoing movements of the like kind, lay in the magic of its party-cries: "Liberty;" "No Centralization;" "No Cliques." The "Reform" movement was not at first democratic. Paradoxical as it may seem, it arose mainly out of sympathy with the Pastors. This certainly was at first the animating sentiment of the most popular and influential lay-leaders of the movement. The three ministerial agitators always found an appeal to this sentiment their most effective weapon. The main attack of the *Fly-sheets* was upon Dr. Bunting, whom they represented as the despot of the Connexion, and on men in departments whom they made out to be, for the most part, his nominees and supporters. There had been amongst the Ministers themselves, even from the date of Wesley's death, a sincere dislike and a sensitive dread of everything which might seem to wear the aspect of **autocracy**, or government by departmental officers. The early Preachers resolutely guarded against the undue ascendancy of even such men as Coke, Benson, and Mather. It was this feeling that prevented the adoption of the American Methodist episcopacy. Moreover, they shrank from the concentration of Connexional power or influence in any particular place, quite as much as in one particular person. Yet the felt need of something of the kind was almost as strong as the fear of it. This felt need and indeed the actual rise of such a power are both indicated in Dr. Bunting's very first letter from London: "August 26th, 1803. This morning I attended the meeting of all the London Preachers, which is held at City Road every Saturday to fix the plans and to give advice to any Preachers from the country who choose to apply for it." This incidental usage shows how easily, innocently, and inevitably there might grow up in the metropolis the very thing which the *Fly-sheets* denounced as "**centralization.**"

**To what did Dr. Bunting owe his great influence in the Connexion ?**

Dr. Bunting's eminence and influence grew naturally out of an un-

paralleled combination of great qualities, an accumulation of unrivalled gifts, and a succession of unmatched services. He was acknowledged to be one of the greatest **Preachers** of his age. As a **debater**, in Conference or committee, he had no rival. As a **counsellor**, he was unmatched in penetration, width of view, promptitude, and courage. As an **administrator**, he was unapproached in sagacity, aptitude, personal influence, and indefatigability. The inspired maxim: "He that **ruleth**, with **diligence**," was strikingly illustrated by Dr. Bunting's habits. His **character** was spotless. In his case firmness of purpose and dignity of bearing were combined with generosity and gentleness towards young men, and sympathy and tender-heartedness towards the afflicted. Add to these high qualities ease of manner, a masterly elocution, and the aspect of a man created to command. Moreover, he was a thorough Wesleyan Methodist and Wesleyan Methodist Pastor. Converted under Benson's ministry, built up by the preaching and the direct personal instructions of the great leaders of Methodism after Wesley's death, in his early ministry the colleague of the most distinguished of them, he came to be regarded as the embodiment and index of genuine, original Wesleyan Methodism.

As a Circuit Minister, he was the exemplification of his own famous composition *The Liverpool Minutes*: a document which "presents the ideal Methodist Preacher and his work as no one else has attempted to depict them."

And, best of all, his character and his spiritual habitudes reposed upon a firm substructure of humble devotion to God and to His cause. His commanding composure in the most difficult and responsible positions was the "open reward" of secret prayer and singleness of aim.

It must not be supposed that Jabez Bunting was all cold strength and apathetic greatness. Far otherwise. Though from a distance he seemed—

"Like a statue, solid-set,  
And moulded to colossal calm,"

yet, on nearer view, one found that the material of his majestic make was as richly veined and variegated as the marble of his ancestral Derbyshire.

Jabez Bunting's pre-eminence was rendered inevitable, not only by his great qualities and faculties, but still more by his faithful and industrious employment of them, which resulted in his manifold services. The fable of the giant with a hundred hands must have originated in some hero of the like multiform, deft, and

energetic helpfulness. He manifested a power of guiding and expediting business which was promptly recognised by eminent Ministers of other denominations. Our Lord's maxim, "Moreover, whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant," was wonderfully illustrated in the case of Jabez Bunting. His capability was sustained by inexhaustible assiduity. In Conference or committee he could sit out any one.

By the year 1806 the **business** of the Connexion had so accumulated that it was found necessary to appoint an assistant secretary to the Conference. At the close of the seventh year of his ministry, he was "compelled to take" his "seat in that character." His "seat in that character" was a visible distinction and elevation. There were at that time but three seats raised above the pews occupied by the body of the Conference: those of the President, the Secretary, and the Assistant Secretary, who were thus literally **looked up to** by the rest. Of these the President was changed yearly, the Secretary often, whilst the Assistant Secretary held his place year after year. He consoled himself for this "real misfortune in that he secured by it the advantages of a capital station in the Conference, close to the President's chair, and of gaining considerable information on our affairs." Henceforth the most familiar form in Conference was the tall, impressive physique of Jabez Bunting, and the most familiar tones were those of his clear, commanding voice. He thus, too, became, of all Methodist Ministers, the most versed in all the details of Conference-business and all the affairs of our Connexion throughout one of the most formative periods of our history. He soon, by sheer force of superior ability, aptitude, and information, and by strength of character, became really Assistant President, as well as Assistant Secretary, as he sat "close to the President's chair." From this vantage-ground, he "watched the indications of opinion and of feeling." Every deliverance he made in Conference seemed to come, in some sense, **ex cathedrâ**.

By the Conference of 1820, he was elected President. "With the exception of Coke, he was the youngest man ever so honoured." From this time forward, for a stretch of years, scarcely an office of first-rate importance could become vacant but Bunting was sure to be thought of as the most competent to fill it. It was obvious to object to the accumulation of office on one individual; but in the circumstances the objection was of little practical avail, inasmuch as no office held by Jabez Bunting could be transferred to any other shoulders without detriment to the public service.

The servant entrusted by the Master with "ten talents" requires

a proportionate range and variety of area to “occupy till” his Lord “come.” And Jabez Bunting’s case was a signal illustration of the evangelic maxim: “To him that hath shall be given.”

**Did any other circumstances combine to increase Dr. Bunting’s influence?**

Yes. One of Jabez Bunting’s fine administrative endowments was that of discovering latent ability and aptitude in younger men or men in comparatively obscure positions—an almost intuitive discernment of a man’s specialities. As Connexional business increased, and fresh departments were created, and able men were set apart to fill new offices, their offices necessarily conferred on them a status, especially as they owed their election simply to their eligibility, and justified that election by the fidelity and efficiency of their services.

Before Manchester was, wisely, made the seat of the Chapel Committee, and the Theological Institution was opened at Didsbury, departmental men were naturally located in the metropolis, the focus of intelligence and influence, where almost the entire extra-Conferential business of the Connexion was transacted. So early as 1806, there occurs this order in the *Minutes*: “The brethren in London are requested to draw up a Circular Letter to the Preachers,” etc., and in 1811 the following: “The London Preachers are directed to consider, revise and amend the *Laws and Regulations of the Legal and Merciful Funds*,’ etc. (*Minutes*, xii., 222). No doubt economical considerations—the saving of heavy travelling expenses, the convenience of meeting, etc.—had great weight in determining this arrangement. Hence the ablest Ministers obtained a thorough acquaintance with Connexional affairs, and an expertness and confidence in discussion with which few of their less-practised brethren could compete. Superior men who came to Conference deeply versed in all the matters for deliberation, and with the faculty for business well breathed by frequent exercise, must have had a decided leverage over the body of the brethren, who enjoyed throughout the year comparatively few opportunities for consultation on the general affairs of Methodism, and were consciously deficient in the ease and self-reliance which are indispensable in debate, but which without considerable practice few can attain. Moreover, some official brethren naturally acquired, along with facility in business and discussion, a **penchant** for business and discussion.

Another advantage which these eminent Ministers possessed was that they attended Conference as a matter of course, a privilege not equally diffused amongst the brethren.

Now it was obviously a great convenience and economy of time to have in Conference a few men more experienced and *au fait* than the rest to draw up documents and resolutions, and put their less expert brethren into the way of conducting business with regularity and despatch. That the Conference derived very decided and invaluable advantages from the existence of such a class of brethren was apparent. A vast community like that of Wesleyan Methodism must have, either formally or virtually, an executive as well as a legislative power; and the functions of the President and Secretary between one Conference and another were strictly limited, whilst the very moderate powers of the Chairmen of Districts were locally restricted. A convocation limited by law to three weeks in a year can hardly prepare, discuss, and complete the business of a Church spread over half the globe. Lord Bacon, in his essay *on Despatch*, says: "There are three parts of business—the preparation, the debate, and the perfection (perfecting) whereof, if you look for despatch, let the middle only be the work of many, and the first and last the work of few." But the first and last parts of Church-business—the preparation and the perfecting—which so long as Wesley lived he himself had performed—were imperfectly provided for in the economy of Methodism. It was thus left to any whose talents, position, and personal influence might empower them, and whose public spirit and individual tastes might incline them, to discharge this necessary function, as best they might.

From all these combined causes, Dr. Bunting and a few superior men became possessed of a preponderating influence in addition to that which belonged to their respective offices, and superinduced by circumstances: a power not the less real because not theirs by formal investiture or egotistic usurpation, yet by some the more questioned because so shadowy. They could not be called upon by vote of Conference to resign a power with which they had never been entrusted by the suffrages of their brethren; they could not be required to abdicate what they never usurped, to *restore that which they took not away*.

And the fear was, not lest organization should crush out spirituality, but lest officialism should cramp individual freedom. The man who drew up *The Liverpool Minutes*, the keynote of Methodist evangelism, was the last to be suspected of a tendency to unspiritualize Methodism. The only revivalism which Dr. Bunting distrusted and disliked was that of which Dow and Caughey were the types; which he and many of his coevals regarded as containing elements of irreverence and unreality. The revivalism of Ouseley, Stoner, John Smith, Storry, Henley,

Rattenbury, and Carvosso was after his own heart. But several earnest and able men feared lest Dr. Bunting's policy of consolidation, and his endeavour to give to Methodism a firm and complete organization and a compact and energetic administration, should be pushed too far. They also felt that the immense influence of Dr. Bunting and his closest coadjutors, being irresponsible, because incidental and undefined, should be carefully held in check, lest at any time direction should become dictation. It is a truism that in all humanly contrived and humanly worked governmental machinery there are dangers on either hand, which sincere and earnest minds will variously apprehend according to their diverse points of view and habits of thought. Hence several Ministers in succession, Dr. Dixon especially, were urged, not indeed to "head a constitutional opposition" (Canon Dixon's *Life of Dr. Dixon*, p. 315), yet by presenting, and in some sort representing, the obverse of great questions of Methodist policy, to balance the personal ascendancy with which the surpassing talents and services, combined with unmatched force of character, had invested Dr. Bunting.

But the very word "opposition" as applied to Conference, and seeming to suggest a certain set of principles which is in power and another set which is out of power, is meaningless or misleading. The Conference has no Ministerial or Opposition benches, no Right, Left, or Centre. There, every member is an independent member, and every measure is debated on its own merits. Hence, on the most searching or even scorching questions, speakers and voters find themselves now side by side, and now front to front, with kaleidoscopic variations.

Nevertheless, there did exist in the minds of not a few Ministers a more or less pronounced anti-Bunting feeling. So early as 1815, Benson, "his spiritual father," perceptibly chafed under young Bunting's potency in Conference. Henry Moore, too, though, when in perplexing circumstances, glad to consult the judiciousness of a man so much his junior, was yet none the better pleased to meet in him an opponent of his excessive claims with a still stronger will and a power of speaking even more effective than his own. Mr. Gandy, the lay-leader of the agitation in 1849, was the legatee, not only of Moore's library and papers, but also of his non-acquiescence in Bunting's influence.

The charge was often brought against Dr. Bunting, notably in the *Fly-sheets*, that he frowned down freedom of debate. Few statements could be further from fact. A frank and manly opposition, which kept well within the lines of Wesleyan Methodist and Christian law, had nothing at all to fear from Jabez Bunting. It was only an

unfraternal individualism or a stealthy schemingness that drew down his "thunderbolts."

Yet some men of great force and independence were overawed by veneration for the noble character and powers and the whole grand personality of Jabez Bunting, especially as the living embodiment of original Methodism. It must be confessed too that Dr. Bunting in the heat of debate, or when the slovenly performance of duty "vexed his righteous soul," could speak wounding words, or shoot out arrows which, even when withdrawn, still left a rankling sore. He sometimes, too, gave retort instead of reasoning, and blinked the argument whilst he floored the man.

The Leeds organ affair in 1828 and the disruption under Dr. Warren six years afterwards raised a tempest of hostility to Dr. Bunting, he being credited with the vigorous and decisive measures for the restoration and preservation of order. The bitter aspersions on his honoured name called forth counter-declarations in Conference of unbounded esteem for, and confidence in, a man so great and good, who was yet so misrepresented and maligned. These declarations, again, aggravated the feeling of jealousy against the vast influence of one man.

Unhappily, too, just about the time of the "Reform" agitation, a few departmental men of great ability spoke or acted imprudently, some even culpably. Three of these "ceased to be recognized" as Ministers amongst us, yet on their account "the ministry" was "blamed."

Hence, for some years before the issuing of the *Fly-sheets*, a feeling had spread extensively against a supposed undue predominance of Dr. Bunting, even amongst those who confessed the highest admiration of his graces and his gifts.

But when the utmost deductions are made, Jabez Bunting must be recognized as one of the very greatest and one of the very best men that ever adorned and advanced the cause of Methodism.

### What were the main characteristics of Dr. Bunting's policy?

The two poles of Dr. Bunting's policy were: **Pastoral Rights and Responsibilities**, on the one hand, and **Popular Rights and Responsibilities**, on the other. His aim, and to a great extent his success, was to develop both, simultaneously and symmetrically. He saw that the gateway into the ministry should be narrowed and guarded. He wished to place the Pastorate on a higher plane of educational acquirement, in order that every Methodist Minister might, in all respects, be such as "no man" could "despise." But he insisted on

a clear distinction between the Pastor and all other office-bearers in the Church. And this grew out of a deep and humbling view of the responsibilities of the pastoral office.

When he entered the ministry, the views and wishes of Wesleyan Methodists as to the Church-status of the "Travelling Preachers" were vague and various. Jabez Bunting saw that Wesleyan Methodist Ministers were, to all spiritual intents and purposes, true New Testament Pastors; and he would have them both regard and conduct themselves as such, and be so regarded and deferred to by their flocks. "Let us never forget that we are under solemn obligations to conduct ourselves, not as mere chairmen, but as the Pastors" (*Liverpool Minutes*). Hence he advocated the more solemn and impressive form of Ordination, and the **Theological Institution**. Yet, by his simultaneous development of the prerogatives and powers of the people, he was the champion, the protector, and the evolver of the popular element in our polity. In committing himself to this twofold task, he was exposed to endless misconception and misrepresentation on the right hand and on the left. In his efforts to secure for the people their due degree of power, he had to brave and breast the published judgment of some of his most influential brethren. To Jabez Bunting must, in the barest historic justice, be assigned the honour of giving to the *polity* of Wesleyan Methodism the coherence, homogeneity, and **balance** which characterize its doctrinal system. The culminating legislation of 1876 was, to most minds, the logical deduction from, and the natural sequence of, the adjustments and amplifications which were the handiwork of his constructive genius. The steady strengthening of the lay-element in the administration of the various departments of the Methodist economy in the Connexional committees was in the main Dr. Bunting's work.

**Is there any great name in English history of which you are reminded by the genius and the career of Jabez Bunting?**

Had Bunting lived in mediæval times, when the greatest theologians and the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries were also Chancellors and foremost Ministers of State, he would have figured as a famous Churchman, like Lanfranc or like Langton. But there was one great contemporary of his to whose genius and career that of Bunting bore a striking resemblance—the statesman-orator William Pitt. They were alike in the extreme juvenility of each when he became eminent in his respective sphere; in the fact that their governing power rested, in

the first instance, on their transcendent speaking power, in their wonderful self-possession and self-mastery, as well as their mastery of the matters on which they spoke ; in the fact that neither of them lost his head through the brilliance of his earliest successes ; in the fact that, next to oratory, their first great development of power was in economics and finance ; in the fact that they were prime advocates of popular rights, and yet by drift of circumstances became proverbial for the maintenance of legitimate power ; and in the fact that though full of philanthropic, peaceful, and progressive projects, yet their names became associated with warfare and repression. Both were firm and ardent friends of civil and religious liberty, yet both counselled stringent measures for the maintenance of law and order. As Pitt was "the greatest master of parliamentary government that ever existed" (Macaulay), so Bunting was the greatest master of Connexional Church-government. Both the statesman and the preacher had the advantage of an imposing presence, a commanding voice, and a dignified delivery, and each was terrible in satire and retort, and dexterous in disentangling himself from a difficulty in debate ; but Bunting's style was the perfection of simplicity, whilst Pitt's was too apt to become laboured and inflated. Each was endowed with immovable courage and indomitable strength of will, which made him a bold landmark and an impregnable breakwater in seasons of storm.

But, as to his **principles of government**, Bunting much more resembled the greatest of American statesmen, Alexander Hamilton. Guizot's description of the latter applies with equal force to Jabez Bunting : "The genius who most powerfully contributed to introduce into the constitution of the United States (read United Societies) every element of order, of force, and of duration in it, and who must be classed among the men who have best known the vital principles and fundamental conditions of government worthy of the name."

**What are the lessons to be learnt from Dr. Bunting's administration and the agitations of 1834 and 1849 ?**

The great lesson is the absolute necessity of preserving in perfect harmony the **internal** relations of the Wesleyan Methodist brotherhood.

It was a curious and instructive inversion that, whilst it was the people who forced upon the Preachers the assumption of ministerial functions and status, it has been, from Mr. Kilham to Dr. Warren and

Messrs. Everett, Dunn, and Griffith, one or more of the Preachers who have stirred up the people to democratic demands.

The disruption of 1849 arose out of a disturbance in the internal relations of the Conference, and thus emphasizes the primary necessity of guarding with the most sensitive care the harmony and healthiness of those relations. In order to this four things are indispensable: 1. The distribution of honour, office, and Connexional administration to the widest possible extent consistent with the efficient working of the whole Connexional machinery. 2. The resolute guarding against either the fact or the semblance of excessive local or individual concentration of power. 3. The exercise and the encouragement of perfect freedom of manly, kindly, brotherly speech in Conference and committee. 4. The resolute discountenancing, both by Ministers and people, of all party organs, like the *Wesleyan Times* or the *Wesley Banner*, by which a non-acquiescent minority in the Conference and the Quarterly Meetings appeal to the public against the decisions of their brethren in both the one and the other, and endeavour to inoculate universal Methodism with their own ecclesiastical and political preferences. Every such serial is itself "the beginning of strife" and division, of partisanship in a brotherhood wherein partisanship is utterly incongruous, and as unseemly as it is unsafe.

If these points be guarded against, the catastrophe of 1849 can never recur. There will always, probably, be two tendencies, or drifts, in a large body of Ministers; but so long as the freedom of decorous discussion and fraternal animadversion is inviolate—

"And friendly, free discussion, calling forth  
From the fair jewel truth its latent ray"—

and no party combinations are formed, inducing counter-combinations; and so long as anonymous personalities and dictatorial party-organs are Connexionally discouraged, the internal relations of the Conference will be kept safe and sound.

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## CHAPTER XXV

MODIFICATION AND EXPANSION OF WESLEYAN METHODIST  
POLITY SINCE 1850.—THE REPRESENTATIVE CONFERENCE.**What further modifications and expansions of the Wesleyan Methodist polity took place?**

The Conference of 1851 appointed a Committee of Ministers to meet during the year "to examine the principal suggestions contained in the memorials and other communications presented from various parts of the Connexion and to report on the same to the next Conference, touching the practicability and the expediency of certain modifications or changes in the practical application of some parts of our economy and discipline." Seven hundred and forty-five laymen were subsequently invited to confer with the Committee of Ministers on the same questions. The conclusions arrived at by these meetings were, with a few slight modifications, adopted by the Conference. The principal recommendations were :—

1. The defining "the proper constitution of a Quarterly Meeting."
2. The providing a "Special Circuit Meeting," "for retrying an accused member or local officer." This was to come into operation when a Superintendent was "obstructed in his pastoral duties by the prevalence of a factious spirit." This meeting is to consist of twelve members of the Quarterly Meeting, chosen by the meeting itself. The Chairman of the District is the Chairman of the Special Circuit Meeting. If the accused party be convicted, the sentence is at the discretion of the Superintendent, with the advice of his colleagues and the Chairman. The convicted person has still a right of appeal against the sentence to the District Meeting and the Conference. The Superintendent, on his part, has also the right of appeal to District Meeting and Conference against what may seem to him an unjust **verdict** of the Special Circuit Meeting.

3. The law of 1794 which, in the case of the trial of a Trustee, conjoined with the Leaders' Meeting his co-trustees who were also members of the same Society, was explained as applying only to "the Trustees of the chapel with which the Society is connected:" as, otherwise, when an accused person was the Trustee of two or more chapels, the disciplinary power of the Leaders' Meeting might have been entirely swamped by Trustees from various localities.

4. The right of appeal from local Church-meetings to the Conference

was reaffirmed, as necessary in order "to prevent the absolute local independence of single Societies, circuits, or districts"—which would be fatal to the Connexional principle—and to protect individual members "from the undue pressure of local partialities, prejudice, or irritation."

5. The right of circuit-memorializing of Conference "on Connexional subjects" was simplified and extended, and given to the June Quarterly Meeting, thus doing away with the need of a separate after-meeting for the purpose of memorials. Ten days' notice must be given to the Superintendent "of the particular motion or resolution which any member of the Quarterly Meeting intends to propose as the basis of a memorial," the meeting having the power of amending the resolution if it adopt its "substance or principle." The memorial is to be signed by the majority individually. No memorial infringing on the fundamental doctrines or discipline of Methodism, or involving an interference on the part of one circuit with the local affairs of another, can be entertained.

These regulations, having met with "a very cordial reception" by the Quarterly Meetings, were confirmed by the Conference of 1853.

The successful resistance of unconstitutional agitation was followed, as always, by consolidation and extension.

### What was the origin of the Representative Conference?

The year 1877 witnessed a most important development of the Wesleyan Methodist economy: the dividing the Conference into two distinct sessions—the Pastoral and the Representative—the latter consisting of two hundred and forty Ministers and two hundred and forty laymen, elected by the District Committee; the Ministers by Ministers, the laymen by laymen, except that members of the Legal Conference who are able to attend, and certain specified departmental officers whose presence is necessary to the efficient transaction of business, and certain lay office-bearers in the like position are necessarily included in the number. This seemed to most minds the logical development of the Committees of Review, of which the representative element was the lay-element, and which exercised such a powerful and salutary influence on Methodism. Although theoretically consultative committees, they had proved powerful factors in Wesleyan Methodist administration, as preparatory committees, strongly influencing the course of legislation. They were delightful reunions, in which the Connexional sentiment was strengthened by being gratified and expressed, and lucid and well-balanced deliberative eloquence was often strikingly developed, as well as the economic

wisdom which dwells with prudence. The speeches were, as a rule, both timely and telling, and, on Home Mission questions especially, often instinct with spiritual power. The advantage of securing the judgment of so many capable and experienced men of business on questions of arrangement and finance was conspicuous. The increased interest taken in the various departments of the work by men of wealth was highly productive. Year after year the business of reviewing was transacted with more searching scrutiny of detail, and with greater probability of immediate and continuous action on the alertness and effectiveness of departments. Fruitful suggestions were made, as well as earnest and opportune appeals. The Missionary Committee of Review was sometimes more jubilant and animating than even the annual meeting at Exeter Hall. The impression produced on outsiders by the newspaper reports of the proceedings of these committees was most favourable.\*

To delay much longer the admission of the representative laity into the Conference itself, during the transaction of its financial and economic business, as in the District Committee, seemed to many to be an arrest of natural growth ; and arrested growth is apt to become thorny. The representative committees could not much longer have remained—like Convocation—a court where everything was discussed and nothing decided.

Affairs and events also naturally led up to the same conclusion, especially the large share assigned to the laity in the council of the reconstructed Irish Church. At the Conference of 1875 a “conversation” took place on the best method of securing to the laity of Methodism “a more direct, adequate, and formal participation in matters of administration not purely pastoral.” The subject was ventilated in the best possible spirit, and with the happiest results. It was felt that no time could be more auspicious for the prompt and mature consideration of the question—prompt that it

\* Thus a remarkable leader in the *Times* for August 6th, 1873, evidently written by one who knew little of Methodism, since he mistook the committees for Conference itself, calls attention to the very business-like fashion in which the work was done, contrasting it with the slowness of parliamentary proceedings. It adds : “The Wesleyans are economical and judicious in their expenditure. They are clearing away debt, insuring against fire, providing for superannuations, and satisfying their occasional need, with an elasticity and facility beyond the power of any ‘Establishment.’ They have money at command.” It concludes by saying : “After a century of grand doings, they are still conscious of a call to work, and of the good old work that made Wesley a great name in the Church.”

might be mature. In order to "make haste slowly," it behoved to begin in good time, so as to avoid an over-eagerness to force on an organic change before the Connexion had time to know what it really wanted, and how that want might be best provided for.

It could not be said that the conjunction of laymen with Ministers in the District Committee, which had grown up since the beginning of the present century, had either disturbed the mutual relations of Ministers and people, or impaired the feeling of brotherhood amongst the Ministers themselves. So far, then, the conjoint action of Ministers and laymen had been tried, and had worked so well that no one could take alarm at the appointment by the Conference of 1875 of first a committee of Ministers to report to the District Meetings, and then of a committee of Ministers and laymen to report to Conference, as to whether a feasible plan could be devised for remedying the acknowledged defects of the present system of lay-action in connection with the sessions of Conference, especially by giving finality to the resolutions of the combined ministry and laity; always securing on the one hand the inalienable responsibilities and rights of the **Legal Conference** and the Scriptural responsibilities and rights of the Pastorate, and on the other the constitutional rights of the Quarterly Meetings. The provision that no new regulation of Conference can be connexionally enforced until it has been laid before the Quarterly Meetings throughout the Connexion, and never is enforced until it has received the assent of the majority of those meetings, makes Wesleyan Methodism one of the most popular Church-systems ever devised.

The task entrusted to the committees was of no trifling difficulty, being no less than the adjustment of new machinery of very considerable magnitude to a Church-system which was the admiration of all unprejudiced minds that had been led to study it.

It was not to be expected that an extension of the area of the Conference, and an alteration of its structure, should be effected without lengthened, anxious, and sometimes impassioned discussion. Though the change was in no wise a change of principle, the Scriptural responsibilities of the Pastorate being most sensitively and strictly guarded, and indeed reasserted with the clearest and firmest articulation, and with the emphasis of confirmed conviction; receiving a documentary embodiment which had all the force of a definitive declaration of Church-principles; yet it undeniably involved a significant and signal change in the composition of the supreme court of Wesleyan Methodist administration, introducing an element which, though familiar to our lower courts, and there time-tested and time-sanctioned, was yet quite

new to the highest council of our Church. The Conference ceased to be altogether an exclusively ministerial assembly. The title-page of its annual record had to be altered : it could no longer be put forth as Minutes of conversations between the Methodist **Ministers**, but as also including the results of the conjoint deliberations of Ministers and laymen. A fraternal sentiment, as beautiful as strong, had naturally grown up around the annual assembly of the Pastoral Brotherhood. Long usage had seemed to make the words "**purely ministerial**" part of the very definition of the Conference. What wonder then that some of the most venerable, most richly endowed with intellectual and spiritual gifts, the most trusted and looked up to leaders of the body manifested a strong shrinking from an alteration so large and so important ? "No man, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new, for he saith, The old is better."

Hence there was much to be said, and still more to be felt, in favour of **letting well alone**. Yet it was better that such a surrender of prestige and privilege, though not of principle, by the presbytery to the people, should be made, as it was made, by a **very large majority** of votes. This gave to the concession an air of heartiness very potent in the interests of peace and love.

The profound, solemn, and most "expressive silence" with which the announcement of the voting was received, after such a lengthened period of solicitous excitement, was very striking and impressive. Every one seemed awed, as in the presence of a great and epoch-making event. A dignity and a devoutness worthy of such a body of Ministers, at such a crisis, held the whole Conference under absolute control. The peaceful way in which this great change was accomplished showed the wisdom of making it in a time of peace. "The surest way to prevent seditions, if the times do bear it, is to take away the matter of them" (Bacon).

The acquiescence of the minority was most prompt and loyal, perfect and co-operative.

The Conference of 1876 closed a chapter in the history of Wesleyan Methodism, and closed it worthily. The details of the system of lay-representation in the Conference were so far completed that the new order of things came into operation at the Conference of 1878. The **mode and machinery** of lay-representation were agreed on at Bristol in 1877, as peacefully and pleasantly as its **principles** had been defined and determined at Nottingham. The wisdom of the resolutions adopted by Conference was seen in their adherence, not only to the principles, but also, as far as possible, to the usages, of Wesleyan Methodism.

Never was a great progressive movement accomplished in the spirit of more cautious and loyal constitutionalism. It were difficult to conceive how the happily stated axiom of sound policy enunciated by the President (Dr. Pope) could have been more closely carried out than in the details of the alteration in the composition of the Conferences: "the **maximum of adaptation with the minimum of change.**" The debate on these details was marked by a moderation and quietness possible only in a healthy and harmonious state of a community, and of the deliberative body at the head of its affairs. In this was seen the wisdom of not deferring an inevitable change till it should be importunately demanded. Had there been a period of prolonged public agitation of the question, it would have been hard to settle it with so much moderation and discretion.

### **What was the significance of this change?**

As with Wesley, so with Wesleyan Methodism: no change is a new departure, but, on the contrary, a new **advance** on the old lines, so well tried and well kept up. An important additional safeguard was given against legislation out of harmony with the views and feelings of the Connexion as a whole, the rights of Quarterly Meetings in this respect being reaffirmed and guaranteed afresh; and it was further provided that "no new law shall come into force until it shall have been submitted to the District Committees, . . . and until their reports, if any, shall have been considered" (*Minutes*, 1877, p. 219).

### **What was the most difficult part of the new arrangement?**

Of course the most difficult and delicate part of the task was the delimitation of the strictly pastoral province, which was still reserved for the Pastoral Session of Conference, from the economical and financial business, which was assigned to the Mixed, Representative Session. To draw a rigidly precise and accurate line between the two departments of Church-work was impossible; the bare attempt to draw one would have been a mischievous mistake. No ocean or mountain range, foaming Firth or complex river-system, divides the two. In Church-affairs the spiritual and the economic interpenetrate each other. Yet the ultimate responsibility for preserving the peace and purity of the Church rests, according to the New Testament, with the God-made, Church-recognised "overseers" of "the flock." This inalienable responsibility was fully guarded.

Still further, the Leaders and Local-preachers of Wesleyan Methodism are justly and fairly constituted the guardians of their own orders. No one can become a Leader but by the act of the Leaders' Meeting. No one can become a Local-preacher but by the act of the Local-preachers' Meeting. A faulty Trustee cannot be deprived of his membership in the Society without the conjoint action of his brother-Trustees and the Leaders' Meeting. It is clearly right that, in like manner, the Pastorate should be the guardian of its own order, should have the right of admitting candidates to that order, after approval by the Quarterly Meetings, and due examination and probation; and that each inculpated Minister should also be tried by his brother-Ministers.

In Methodism, as in apostolic Christianity, the distinction between the "spirituality" and the "laity" is not **hard and fast**. The Methodist—the Christian—ministry is not a moated, battlemented **keep**, with a lofty palisade. A large proportion of the lay-representatives are laborious and spiritually-minded Leaders or Local-preachers, or both; and Methodism is equally remote from the unscriptural positions of hierarchical clericism on the one hand and anarchical Plymouth Brethrenism on the other. The departments of education, including our Sunday-school Union and our schools for Ministers' children; our Home Missions and Foreign Missions; the branches of our Theological Institution; evangelistic work in the Army and Navy; the religious observance of the Lord's Day; the extension of Methodism in Great Britain, etc.—all of which come before the Conference in its Representative Session—clearly and deeply involve intensely spiritual matters. One great advantage of the new arrangement is the double **Conversation on the State of the Work of God**, first in the Pastoral Session, then in the Mixed Session. One fact has become most auspiciously apparent—the "representative" laity of Methodism have no hankering after, no leaning towards, a specious and insidious **Multitudinism**, which would barter **Methodism proper** for sounding statistics and loose adherence. From the laymen there has arisen a cry, not for less stringent, but for more stringent, **discipline** in our Church. The speeches of the men whom the tribes sent up to the great Council of our Israel, names "famous in the congregation, men of renown," have usually exhaled the very quintessence of Methodism.

By the due delimitation of the Pastoral and the Representative Sessions of Conference respectively, the manifoldly objectionable arrangement of **voting by orders** was obviated; a system which

unhappily obtains in the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The lay-element is also much larger in the British Conference than in that of the Methodist Episcopal Church. With us the numbers are 240 Ministers and 240 laymen. In the American Conference the numbers are: ministerial delegates, 222; lay-delegates, 133.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THANKSGIVING FUND.—THE OECUMENICAL CONFERENCE.

**Was there any Connexional celebration of this great era in the history of Methodism?**

There was.

That such a bold expansion of the Church-structure of so large a confederation of Churches should have been effected without the estrangement of a single Minister, or, so far as is known, of a single member of our Societies, was felt to be a consummation devoutly to be ascribed to the good providence and the good Spirit of the living God. It was felt that some appropriate celebration was called for of such an event, so auspiciously accomplished. It was also felt that the most Methodistic form of thanksgiving would be the raising of a **Thanksgiving Fund**, to give Wesleyan Methodism a fair and unfettered start on its new career, by relieving its various departments of impeding and depressing debt. It seemed chilling and unseasonable "as snow in summer" that "retrenchment" should have to be the order of the day, even with regard to our Theological Institution and our endeared and God-honoured Foreign Missions. This was not the time for contraction, but for expansion.

Ample time was taken: the holding of the great central public meetings extended over two years, from the Conference of 1878 to that of 1880. It proved to be the finest feat of generosity ever achieved even by the Methodists. The success of the effort was due, to a very great extent, to the energy and wisdom of the President, Dr. Rigg. The sum **actually paid** amounted to £297,500. The relief and expansion thus secured were wonderful. The Foreign Missionary Society was disburdened of its load of debt. A new central theological college was erected in the metropolis of Mid-England, and put into full working order. Kingswood School was so enlarged as to allow of the concen-

tration of the two schools for Ministers' sons on the one site, and Woodhouse Grove became a middle-class school. The two schools for Ministers' daughters were reorganized, the debt of £12,000 on the Schools' Fund being discharged. The debt of £7,500 on the Home Mission Fund was paid, and new buildings for the benefit of soldiers and sailors were erected at Aldershot and Malta. The debts of £14,000 on the Education Fund, £3,000 on the Connexional Sunday-school Union, and of £4,500 on the Children's Home were all swept away; additional sums were voted of £500 to the Children's Home and £5,000 to the Connexional Sunday-school Union. The debt on the beautiful new chapel at Oxford was wiped off, and aid was given to new German and Welsh chapels in London. Middle-class schools were established in various parts of the country. All the money raised in Scotland was devoted to Scottish Methodism, with the addition of £1,500. The Princess Alice Orphanage at Birmingham was enabled to begin its beneficent work. A fund was established for necessitous Local-preachers, and £2,000 were devoted to the Connexional Temperance Committee. In short, the financial machinery of Methodism was righted and strengthened.

### **What was the next great event in the history of Methodism?**

The assembling of the Pan-Methodist Conference in the mother-chapel, City Road, London. No doubt somewhat similar gatherings of late years—the Pan-Anglican Synod in Lambeth and the Pan-Presbyterian assembly in Edinburgh—suggested the idea of the Pan-Methodist Conference in London. The idea first found voice in America, at the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1876. Dr. Haven was deputed to lay the matter before the British Conference of 1878. The objects of the Council were:—

1. To demonstrate that all the branches of Methodism all the world over which historically trace their origin to John Wesley are "a people essentially one in doctrine, spirit, and purpose" (Official Letter of American Conference Committee to British Conference); and by manifestation of that unity to strengthen and perpetuate it.
2. "Such adjustment of mission-work as to prevent friction and waste."
3. Suggestions as to "modes and agencies for the most successful performance of the Church's work of evangelization."
4. To give a great impulse to all the beneficent activities of the Church.
5. To gain light on "the relation of Methodism as a whole to education, to civil government, to other Christian bodies, and to the world-wide missionary work."
6. An increase of Christian intelligence, of conscious spiritual power, and of faith in the redemption of the race; a more earnest consecration, an intenser glow of enthusiasm, a more daring purpose of evangelism, and consequently more

powerful revivals and larger beneficence. 7. The "challenging of the attention of scholars, thinkers, and reformers to the whole Methodist history, work, and mission."

To these objects the following were added by the committee appointed by the British Conference in their reply to the American committee: "Promoting the practical co-operation of all the numerous and widespread Methodist Churches, the securing of happy and peaceful relations between all the communities represented, and especially cementing that friendship between the British empire and the United States with which are bound up the interests of freedom and evangelical religion throughout the world." The British committee, however, pointed out and emphasized the necessity of a frank recognition, *in limine*, of all the "not unimportant" differences which existed amongst the various Methodist bodies, so as to rule out the discussion of any of the points on which any one of them had separated from the parent-stem. The British Conference of 1879 adopted the recommendations and reservations of its committee, which it reappointed with additional powers. Our brethren on the other side the Atlantic heartily agreed to the restrictions advised by the British committee, and indicated the wide range of deliberation which those restrictions left untouched. On receiving the reply of our Transatlantic brethren, the British Conference instructed the secretary of the committee, the Rev. J. Bond, to communicate with the smaller and younger Methodist bodies at home with reference to their participation in the Council. Every one of these accepted the invitation frankly; and the area of deliberation, with its discreet limitations, was, after free examination, fully agreed to. It was also agreed that the best designation of the assembly was **The Œcumenical Methodist Conference**, and that the Conference should consist of four hundred representatives chosen from the various branches of Methodism throughout the world, as nearly as practicable in proportion to the numerical strength of each community, two hundred from either side of the Atlantic, Ministers and laymen in equal numbers.

On September 7th, 1881, the representatives met in City Road Chapel, London. It was a much larger gathering than the great denominational assemblies which had preceded it. The Pan-Anglican Synod of 1867 consisted of seventy-five bishops—British, Colonial, and American. To the Pan-Presbyterian Council two hundred and eighty-three were elected, but only two hundred and forty-nine were reported as attending. The Methodist Œcumenical Conference brought together delegates from each of the seven sections of British and Irish Methodism, from thirteen distinct Methodist bodies in the United States, from

Canada, South America, the West Indies, Africa, and Australia, from France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Norway, and Sweden, from India and China, and from other mission fields. They represented Churches which comprised four million seven hundred thousand eight hundred and ten registered members—so great was “the number of the names”—thirty-one thousand four hundred and seventy-seven Ministers, “separated to the Gospel of God,” more than eighty-five thousand Local-preachers, and from twenty-three to twenty-five millions of adherents.

Bishop Simpson was appointed to preach the opening sermon, and his grand, glowing, dignified deliverance fully justified the selection. His was a towering figure even in that noble company. At the close of the service the members of the Conference partook together of the Lord’s Supper. The President of the British Conference, Dr. Osborn, fittingly presided the first day, and delivered the Opening Address.

Surely this was a spectacle to heighten the happiness of John Wesley’s heaven. How could he but burst forth again:—

“O the fathomless love that hath deigned to approve  
 And prosper the work of my hands!  
 With my pastoral crook  
 I went over the brook,  
 And, behold, I am spread into bands!”

Yes, when Wesley, without so much as a curacy in his mother-Church, with nothing but his “**pastoral crook**,” his ordination, and “authority to preach the Gospel,” betook himself to field-preaching and street-preaching, and overleaped the babbling, foaming boundary between regular and irregular modes of saving souls, little did he then foresee whereunto that act would grow!

The Conference was closed on the 20th of September by an Address from Dr. Osborn.

Considering the range of its gathering-ground, it may well claim the title **Œcumenical**. It did not meet to determine any debated conditions of Church-membership, nor to define any controverted doctrine, nor to decide any question of ritual or polity. Its work was not to build up a breakwater against encroachments on the liberties of God’s people, nor to denounce this heresy or that. It was composed of Ministers and laymen in about equal numbers. It was in no degree authoritative or legislative. It was not convened by emperor or pope, but was purely voluntary—the family gathering of a great brotherhood of Churches. The Council of Nicæa consisted of three hundred and eighteen bishops, the only layman being the unbaptized Emperor.

The so-called Œcumenical Councils were in no true sense **representative**: they were composed of men **picked** by authority, not elected by the Churches. The Conference at City Road had no reformatory object, like those of Constance and Basle. It was a purely practical and evangelistic convention.

After the second day, which was devoted fittingly to the "Recognition of the hand of God in the Origin and Progress of Methodism" and to kindred topics, the subjects discussed were: **The Evangelical Agencies of Methodism, Methodism and the Young, The Lord's Day and Temperance, Possible Perils of Methodism, Education, The Use of the Press, Home and Foreign Missions, and Christian Unity.**

It was worthy of a great practical people. Some of the most penetrative and fruit-bearing papers were by laymen.

Not only "with one mouth," but also "with one mind," we glorified God. The harmonious heart-beat was felt to be more binding than the stoutest and most skilful knots of verbal unity; and as the song arose—

"See how great a flame aspires,  
Kindled by a spark of grace!"

—the spark by which Wesley's heart was so "strangely warmed" in reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans at the "Society" in London—who could but feel:—

"Lo, the promise of a shower  
Drops already from above!"

Then was brought to pass the saying which is written: "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye." "Then thou shalt see, and **flow together**; and thine heart shall fear, and be **enlarged.**"

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

## FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH-POLITY.—PRACTICAL DOCTRINE OF THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH.—THE PASTORAL OFFICE.

Since Wesley neither began nor carried on his great Church organization with any clear programme or on any definite platform, and the Conference has left itself to the guidance of Providence in its adaptations and adjustments of Wesleyan Methodist polity to changed circumstances and advancing light, has the result been to leave Methodism destitute of any fixed and guiding principles of Church-structure and Church-government?

Far from it. That has recurred, with regard to Wesley and his successors, which is recorded of Abraham's good and faithful servant Eliezer, and has been by them as devoutly recognized: "And the man bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master, Who hath not left desolate my master of His mercy and His truth: **I being in the way, the Lord led me.**" Wesley and his successors, hitherto, have only been anxious to keep in the straightforward way of duty and of work for God. Their song has been:—

"By Thy unerring Spirit led,  
We shall not in the desert stray;  
We shall not full direction need,  
Nor miss our **providential** way."

Wesley and the Conference would alike disclaim the laurels of constructive genius, as if Wesleyan Methodism were the product of a prodigious organizing faculty. It was the creation of a higher Mind than Wesley's. And the fact that Wesley was no adventurous innovator, but always "eschewed" change as "evil," unless obvious and immediate exigency stamped it as a "**good work for necessary uses**"—this fact has given to Methodism consolidation and permanence as the result of steadfast loyalty to Providence. He—

". . . would not have the restless will  
Which hurries to and fro,  
Seeking for some great thing to do,  
Or secret thing to know."

He—

" . . . would be treated as a child,  
And guided."

But though Wesley was far too great and good a man to allow the fear of being taunted with inconsistency to divert him from the straightforward path to which his grand simplicity had committed him, yet in his various changes he could honestly ask with St. Paul, when he changed his plans: "When I, therefore, was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay? But as God is true, our word to you was not yea and nay" (2 Cor. i. 17, 18).

As to Wesley's simplicity of purpose, Mr. Abbey testifies in his *English Bishops*, etc. :—"Wesley would have preferred a system such as that which he was founding to any other. But so long as the city of God was built, he cared but little how; and his feeling towards the English Church, in its relation to the civil power, was not one of hostility, but rather of indifference."

Yet, as a prominent Free Churchman, Dr. Wilson, of Edinburgh, says:—"His" (Wesley's) "system of organization has been the wonder and admiration of Christendom" (*The Evangelical Succession*, p. 163). Dr. Wilson adds:—"One of the secrets of the success of Methodism, making it the pioneer of all the Churches, has been its organization, its giving the people so large a place in the active service of the Church, and especially its system of itinerant preaching."

The keenest critic of Methodism, Isaac Taylor, says:—"His" (Wesley's) "organization is the most efficiently expansive Christian institute which modern times have seen. It stands alone without a parallel on the field of Church-history, . . . one of the most remarkable experiments in ecclesiastical science that has ever been carried forward;" with "results which find no parallel even in the exciting times of the Reformation" (*Wesley and Methodism*).

Neander has unconsciously, yet precisely, described and vindicated the development of the Wesleyan Methodist Church organization:—"Whenever any form of Church-government has arisen out of a series of events, according to the direction of Divine Providence, and is organized and governed according to the Divine will, He may be said Himself to have established it, and to operate through it by His Spirit." Unquestionably, the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist polities all embody certain elements of Scriptural Church principles, and Wesleyan Methodism claims to be in at least as close and clear accordance with New Testament principles and precedents as any Church in Christendom.

Nothing can progress towards perfection but that which is shaped by life and environment. A parchment church is little better than a cardboard church. Methodism is a marvellous instance of the still living energy of Christianity fashioning itself anew, without external aid. It has become what it is by making all Church-theory and Church-form subservient to the purpose for which the Church was instituted ; according to Wesley's own motto : " Church or no Church, souls must be saved." The Wesleyan Methodist polity is not arbitrary or *accidental*, though it was *incidental*, growing out of the needs of the Societies and the nature of the case.

To admit the fact that Methodism, being a living organism, is what it is as the result of growth, is, then, far from being a disparagement. Not only have the most effective, the most proximately perfect, and the most enduring of human institutions, such as the British Constitution and the English Statute and Common Law, and the whole mighty system of Roman Jurisprudence,—next to Christianity, the greatest factor in Western civilization,—been the slow and steady out-growth of experience, but even the legislation of the Old Testament was, in the main, the incidental or providential result of emergent circumstances. It was only the **Ten Commandments** that came down from heaven written on tables of stone. But the great precedent is that of the gradual and incidental organizing of the Primitive Church.

**Are the Church principles which we have seen to be embodied in the New Testament clearly recognisable in the polity of Wesleyan Methodism ?**

Let us look closely into this question.

We found that the Church of Christ is essentially, in the idea and intention of its Divine Founder, and in its original constitution, a **Brotherhood** or a **Society** (p. 2, First Part). **Has this principle its due place in the polity of Methodism ?**

It is universally admitted that this truth has never, since the Apostolic age, been more clearly embodied in any Christian community than in Methodism. It is impressed upon its very structure. Wesley, in endeavouring " to turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord " (Luke i. 17), was providentially led to gather the converts into " United Societies," and thus, in the simple endeavour to bring back wandering souls to God, he

unconsciously restored the true original Church-idea,—a fact to which he did not wake up until he saw in actual working the plan which he had been led to adopt by the necessities of his great enterprise, without the slightest idea of reconstructing the Church on its original model. Hence, the **Society-structure is the main distinctive feature of Methodism.**

In Methodism membership in the Church is membership “**one of another.**” St. Paul might well seek comfort and edification in the “mutual faith” of himself and the members of the Church; since it was through an otherwise unknown member, Ananias of Damascus, that he received bodily and spiritual sight. The want of this realized fellowship is acknowledged and deplored by many leading men of other Churches, as Dr. Dale (Address to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of 1879) and Dr. Binnie (*The Church*, pp. 42, 43). This again is in exact accord with New Testament Church principles (see First Part, pp. 6, 7).

The fact that the Church is a Society had been distinctly announced by the great Anglican divine Hooker, in his *Ecclesiastical Polity*. “The Church being both a Society, and a Society supernatural, it hath the self-same original grounds with other politic Societies: namely, the natural inclination which all men have unto sociable life, and consent to some certain bond of association.” But the English clergy had, in practice, lost sight of this fact altogether. There was no provision made for the “sociable life” of their flocks as “a Society supernatural.” This lack Wesley supplied, inducing his converts to “consent to” a “certain bond of association.”

The primitive Churches, says Hatch, “were bound together by the tie of a holy life;” hence their “disciplinary character.” The literary Frenchman, Remusat, defines Methodism as “the associated search for holiness.”

We are often represented as no longer a **Society** but a **Church**; as if there were any incompatibility between the one and the other; as if, in becoming a Church, we must needs cease to be a Society. So far is this from the truth, that it is the opposite of the truth. We have seen that the Church itself is **essentially a Society**. And in proportion as the Methodists drift away from the Society-idea, and the Society-structure of primitive Christianity and original Methodism<sup>8</sup> they inevitably decline from their high Scriptural Church-standard and status.

The ordinary Methodist mode of address and reference, “**Brother**” or “**Sister,**” is no mere form of speech.

Is the Wesleyan Methodist Church "an enrolled and privileged Brotherhood," with a regular "form of admission" into it? (p. 3).

It is. The name of each member is entered, on his reception into the Society, in a carefully prepared Church-book, and re-entered quarter by quarter; first a **note of admission on trial** is given, and then a ticket of full membership, "prepared for that purpose," and signed by the Minister. This is renewed, quarter by quarter, at the visitation of the classes by the Minister. This ticket secures to its holder all the privileges of Church-membership; these tickets "being of just the same force as the **commendatory letters** mentioned by the Apostle." Those who bear these tickets are, wherever they come, "acknowledged by their brethren, and received with all cheerfulness" (Works, viii., 257).

What is the "express purpose" for which the Methodist Society was formed? (pp. 3, 5).

This, as we have seen, was the associated pursuit and spread of "Scriptural holiness."

What are the terms of admission into this privileged Brotherhood? (pp. 3, 5).

"A desire to save their souls" on the part of the applicants (Wesley's *Journal*, May 18th, 1788), and an express determination to keep the rules of the Society, a copy of which is placed in their hands.

Is the Wesleyan Methodist Church "a mere Society or corporation," or is it also "a living, self-building organism"? (p. 6).

No Christian Church, since Apostolic times, has more strenuously and successfully striven to realize in practice the New Testament idea of the Church as "a living, self-building organism." No other Church so inculcates, so insists upon, or makes such stated and ample provision for, the realization of Christian fellowship and mutual edification, and a Church-condition in which every member is vitally related to each and all the rest, each member being bound to contribute his share to the sustentation and growth of the others, and to receive from the others, in turn, help, comfort, and "furtherance and joy of faith." Thus the experience of the individual members is, so to

speak, funded or capitalized, for the benefit of all. This is strikingly put in Hymn 503 :—

“ Help us to build each other up,  
Our little stock improve.”

The sixty-two hymns “**For the Society—on Meeting, Giving Thanks, Praying, and at Parting,**” are all exquisitely expressive of the realized “**Communion of Saints.**” Who does not feel a rich aroma, as of the breath of Eden, in such verses as these? —

“ Jesus, united by Thy grace,  
And **each to each endeared,**  
With confidence we seek Thy face,  
And **know our prayer is heard.**

“ Make us into one spirit drink,  
Baptize into Thy name,  
And let us always kindly think,  
And sweetly speak the same.

“ Touched by the loadstone of Thy love,  
Let all our hearts agree,  
And ever toward each other move,  
And ever move toward Thee.”

Should the Methodist people ever let slip this precious principle, “this song shall testify against them as a witness” (Deut. xxxii. 21).

The mutual ministry, which is so clearly and beautifully described in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, has distinct provision made for it in the ordinary arrangements of our Church; provision for “confessing of faults one to another,” “exhorting one another,” “admonishing one another,” and the mutual heartening and upbuilding so urgently insisted on in the New Testament. This is the meaning of the Class-meeting and the Lovefeast.

What “**privileged meetings of its members**” (p. 3) has **Wesleyan Methodism?**

The Class-meeting, the Lovefeast, the Society Meeting, the Covenant Service, and the various Meetings for the management of its economic and financial affairs, and for the maintenance of Christian discipline, such as Leaders' Meetings.

**Has the Wesleyan Methodist Church the power of excluding disreputable or unruly members?** (p. 3).

It is also admitted that no Church in Christendom has a more effective provision for **oversight and discipline, for tending** as well as

for **feeding** the flock, and for the preservation of its purity and peace, than has the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Every member of the Society, and every Minister, is subject to oversight, and to prompt and efficient disciplinary action, if he go seriously astray. The Class-meeting system was at the beginning, and still is, a most important means of personal oversight and discipline, as well as of mutual heartening and edification. A Church without discipline and the power of constitutionally excluding unruly or discreditable members retains the name of a Church only by sufferance and under **notice** of a speedy removal of its candlestick, except it "repent" and "do the first works." (See our Lord's own messages to the "**Angels**" of the **Seven Churches**.) A pastor who connives at evil in a member of his flock is "a partaker in other men's sins." By the Quarterly Visitation of the Classes, the **looking up** of absentees by the Leaders and the Ministers, and by regular pastoral visitation, each member is brought into direct relation with the Pastorate, and under personal Pastoral care. The demand that those who prefer the public ministrations of Wesleyan Methodism to those of any other Church, but decline to submit to its oversight and discipline, and to discharge the **spiritual** obligations of Church-membership, shall nevertheless be admitted to as full membership in the Church as those enjoy who are amenable to oversight and discipline, and who give and receive the mutual edification which we know to be obligatory upon Church members, is as unreasonable as it is unscriptural. To concede this would be to desert the principles alike of Primitive Christianity and Primitive Methodism.

**Are the principles embodied in the Class-meeting essential to Wesleyan Methodism ?**

The principles are, clearly and absolutely, Methodism originated in earnest experimental religion. Its very origin can only be accounted for on this principle; its very existence as a distinct organization and association can only be vindicated on this principle; and its perpetuation can on no other principle be defended. Our glorying in our wondrous history and the spiritual heroes of that history becomes altogether void the moment we cease to insist on, cultivate, and guard a theology and a practical Church-system of experience and of systematic spiritual culture. How shall Methodism continue to spread "Scriptural holiness throughout the land" if it cease to spread it throughout its own congregations and communicants, and the children of its own people? According to Wesley, Methodism is either intensely earnest and systematic experimental religion, or it is an

intrusion and an impertinence. The gravest and most imminent and insidious peril to Methodism lies in the plausible temptation to lower our standard and attenuate our testimony, for the sake of an inclusiveness which will do both the including and the included more harm than good. A father's curse is on us if we do this. Whatever modification, alteration, or addition can be made which will tend to sustain and quicken spiritual life, advance our people in Christian knowledge, and carry on and carry out the true original mission of Methodism, we not only may, but must make. But the abandonment of our testimony as to the privilege and duty of mutual edification is not likely either to quicken our life or further and facilitate our mission. To give up the Society-structure of Wesleyan Methodism would be a change of form betokening a change of spirit. If Methodism should go on altering itself until it has lost its distinctive features, what pretext have the people called Methodists for remaining a distinct religious community?

Methodism must never content itself with raising men to a respectable religiousness. Wesley and his fellow-labourers had a far higher aim than this. What that was, he himself has told us. "We see on every side either men of no religion at all, or men of a lifeless formal religion. We are grieved at the sight, and should greatly rejoice if by any means we might convince some that there is a better religion to be attained, a religion worthy of God that gave it the loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved us; and the loving every soul that God hath made as our own soul. This love we believe to be the never-failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world" (Works, viii., 3). Nothing short of the being able to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" can satisfy the true Methodist Preacher. Again Wesley writes: "This doctrine [Christian perfection] is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists, and for the sake of this chiefly He appears to have raised us up" (*Letter*, September, 1790, xiii., 9). A low standard as to the terms of Church-membership, in all denominations in the United Kingdom and America, resulting in a low standard of spirituality and morality, was one of the chief facts which called for and called forth Methodism. The Church had thrust itself in between the individual soul and Christ, and given itself out to be the sole channel of the Spirit, through clerical ministrations. Hence creed and sacrament were made to serve instead of, rather than to promote, Christian experience and character. Should Methodism cease to insist upon experience as a

condition of membership, it will soon cease to demand it as an indispensable qualification for the Ministry, and yet a spiritually inexperienced Ministry will gradually absorb all spiritual ministrations. In 1846, the Rev. J. Fisk, Pastor of the Congregational Church in New Braintree, Mass., in his *Half-Century Discourse*, said:—"Fifty years ago it was an unusual thing that any duty of a devotional character was performed in public, even by professors of religion, especially in the presence of their Pastor. It was not until I had been in this place more than eleven years that I was permitted to hear a sentence of prayer by one of my people. So far as I ever learned, under the ministry of my predecessor there was not a social meeting in this place. It was much after this fashion in most other Churches" (pp. 7, 8). Fellowship and Discipline, maintaining the purity of the Church (essential elements of the New Testament Church), had been "willingly let die" out of it. These Methodism disinterred, revived, and rehabilitated. To let them once more die down and decompose would be mother-murder by starvation and neglect. Personal religious earnestness and personal religious experience being insisted on in every member of the Church, are recognised of course as absolute prerequisites in every candidate for the Ministry. Hence, in Wesleyan Methodism, the "**spirituality**" are required to be pre-eminently SPIRITUAL.

The following is the solemnly expressed judgment of the Conference on this subject, based upon the experience of Methodism from the beginning. In 1855 the subjoined resolution was recorded in the Minutes:—

"The Conference cherishes an ever-deepening conviction of the value of that spiritual fellowship with each other which our people have been wont to maintain in a regular attendance on our Class-meetings, believing that in this course the members of our Societies of all ages, and **all varieties of knowledge, position, and attainment**, are best enabled to walk comfortably with God, to nourish that **simple and ardent piety which is their only safeguard** against the dangers and **seductions of the age**, to train up spiritually-minded office-bearers for future service. The Conference therefore exhorts all our Ministers to **watch over our Class-meetings with holy jealousy**, and to **use every effort to maintain them strictly in their efficiency**, directing both their **public instructions and their private pastoral influence toward this object with unceasing diligence.**"

**Is Wesleyan Methodism sufficiently careful as to admission to the Church or withdrawal from it?**

On this point, there is certainly danger of remissness. Admission to the Church and exclusion or withdrawal from it should be treated

by the Church as events of the greatest possible importance, solemnity, and significance. The Church must not be treated as a market-hall with unguarded openings for ingress and for egress. The Church must be ever on its guard against the entrance of evil and error from without, and the generating and the spread of evil and error from within, and the straying from the fold of any sheep or lamb. The guarding against this is one of the chief uses of our annual and quarterly numerical returns. For this reason the Lord's "flock" should "pass under the hands of him that telleth them."

The rule is :—

"No person shall be entered upon the Society schedule as a 'Backslider' without particular enquiry into the case—nor even, whenever it may be practicable, without a personal visitation on the part of one of the Ministers" (Resolutions on Pastoral Visitation, adopted in 1847).

**Is the Distinction between Church-members and imperfectly attached adherents Scriptural?**

It is. The Church—the spiritual temple—has, like the material temple, its **outer** or **fore-courts**. These must be recognised as **courts** of the temple—porticoes, or external corridors, roofed and pillared gracefully and massively, and with their own degree of sanctity; but they must be distinguished from, not confounded with, the **sanctuary** itself. Yet they are **part** of the **sacred building**, and must be recognised and treated as such. To this belong those who are "not far from the kingdom of God," though they yet hover on the border-line of the Church and the world; who have in them "some good thing towards the Lord of Hosts," yet hesitate to "come out from among" the worldly "and be separate."

**Is the Wesleyan Methodist Church a purely "voluntary" Society?** (p. 25).

It is. No one can be a full member of it by birth or by the act of others, whether godparents or Ministers, but **with his own express consent**, and on personal confession of Christ. Admission into the Church is acknowledged to be the right of every one, but **only** on his or her avowed acceptance of the terms of membership and fulfilment of its conditions.

**Does the Wesleyan Methodist polity fulfil the Scriptural requirements with regard to the pastoral office?**

It does. No Church in Christendom holds a clearer or a firmer doctrine of the **pastoral office** than that of the Wesleyan Methodist

Church. It amounts to this: God has laid upon the Pastorate of the Church special responsibilities which they can by no means discharge without being invested with special authority and special recognised rights. This authority includes **oversight** and "**rule**," real and effective, to which **obedience and submission** on the part of their flocks are the necessary correlatives. This rule is nevertheless not arbitrary, but **limited** by the directions contained in the word of God, and is valid only so far as it does not conflict with that word. In order to this limitation and reservation, it must be kept within due bounds by well-devised safeguards and counterpoise; which, however, must not be such as to prevent the discharge by the Pastorate of their Scriptural responsibilities.

As in the primitive Church, so in Wesleyan Methodism, some time elapsed before the due distribution of duties and apportionment of rights between Pastors and people was arrived at. But this has at length been reached, at least as nearly as in any Church since the days of the Apostles. The condition and habits of the clergy of the Church to which Wesley belonged, and wished his people to belong as closely and continuously as their spiritual interests would permit, were such as to lead him, in his *Notes on the New Testament*, to insist much more on the **responsibilities** than on the authority of a Christian Minister. But those pastoral responsibilities to **God**, which he sets forth with such solemn emphasis, **necessarily** imply the authority without which they could not possibly be discharged. Yet on all essential points his *Notes on the New Testament* are most explicit. For example, he maintains: 1. The absolute necessity of a Divine call to the ministry. "None but God can give men authority to preach His word" (note on Matt. x. 5). "No man or number of men can constitute an overseer, bishop, or any other Christian Minister; to do this is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost" (Acts xx. 28). No man may select the ministry, or designate his son to it, as a **profession**, as one might choose Medicine, the Law, the Army, or the Navy. It is a **vocation**, "a necessity laid upon" a man. 2. He maintained, in accordance with this truth, the **direct responsibility of a Minister** to God for "the peculiar care" of his flock, and that the call of the Church is but the recognition of the Divine call. "The Pastor, bishop or overseer, had the peculiar care of his flock; and he was to answer for all their souls at the judgment-seat of Christ (Rev. i. 20)." "These seven Churches, with their seven angels, represent the whole Christian Church as it subsists in every age. This is a point of deep importance, and always necessary to be remembered (Rev. ii. 5)."

His own Preachers, with a few exceptions, Wesley did not regard as "Ministers," in the full sense of the word. It is therefore all the more remarkable and significant that he invested them, as the **real, working Pastorate** of the Methodist "people," with a rule, authority, and power over their flocks so comprehensive and so effective. He did this from a **purely practical** point of view. He placed the Societies which he had formed under the government of separated Pastors. But his sermon (XCVII.), published subsequently to the standard Sermons, is a very instructive discourse on *Obedience to Pastors*, founded on the text: "Obey them that have the rule over you," etc., appropriately following that on *Obedience to Parents*, from the text: "Children, obey your parents," etc. In the discourse on Pastors, he states, with all practical precision, the New Testament doctrine of the Pastorate. He shows that this doctrine is equidistant from "the extravagant height to which the Romanists in general carry this direction," etc.; while "not much less has been insisted on by several eminent men of the Church of England," on the one hand; and on the other from the gross error of "making Pastors both the creatures and the servants of their congregations, . . . supposing the Pastors to be altogether dependent upon the people, who, in their judgment, have a right to direct, as well as choose, their Ministers." He rightly says: "If we . . . simply attend to the oracles of God, we may certainly discover a **middle path** in this important matter."

3. He makes the **voluntariness** of the relation between Pastor and people to be essential to the validity of pastoral rights and powers. He positively denies that this or any other text of Scripture binds "parishioners to obey and submit themselves to the Minister of their parish, . . . or that we are bound to obey any Minister because we live in what is called his parish." He adds: "I dare not receive one as my guide to heaven who is himself in the high-road to hell. And such (the more is the shame and the more the pity) are many parochial Ministers at this day."

He asks: "Who are the persons mentioned in the text: 'They that rule over' us?" He answers: "Them that you **willingly accept of to be your guides** in the way to heaven." His position is this: Having accepted Pastors, "at least by your consent," you have placed yourselves under a most solemn obligation to "obey and submit yourselves to them," so long as they do not enjoin anything contrary to Holy Writ. The Scriptural relation between Pastors and people is that between "those who rule," **within Scriptural lines and limitations**, and those who are bound to "obey" and "submit." Having

accepted men as our Pastors, on Scriptural grounds, we are bound to obey them and **submit** ourselves to them, so far as we can without disobeying God. In accordance with his practical spirit, he appeals to the reader : " Do not you stop your own growth in grace, if not by wilful disobedience to this command, yet by careless inattention to it, by not considering it as of the importance it deserves ? "

4. He held pastoral authority to be essentially **parental** authority. In regarding pastoral rule as that of " spiritual parents," in contrast with that of " parochial Ministers "—many of whom, alas ! were not spiritual parents—Wesley could not but regard himself and his " assistants " as the true pastoral rulers of the sheep they had found and fed.

Our blessed Lord taught by institutions, as well as by direct doctrinal deliverances : by the **Apostolate**, and by **Baptism** and the **Lord's Supper**, as well as by His sermons, parables, and private conversation. In like manner the good Spirit and providence of God have guided the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion of Churches into an embodied doctrine of the Pastorate. And it is not a matter of surprise, though it is of devout gratitude, that this practical doctrine of the Pastorate proves on investigation to be that which is in the nearest accordance with the teaching of Christ and His Apostles.

In Wesleyan Methodism the Christian ministry is recognised as a Divine institution, and not the creation of the popular will, and as therefore not to be held in subjection to the popular will. The " **ruling** " functions and qualities of the Pastorate, so prominently put forth in the Pastoral Epistles, in Wesleyan Methodism receive their due regard. The Wesleyan Methodist Minister is the servant of the Church, but he is first and most of all the servant of Christ. He is neither the menial nor the minion of a majority. Preaching and oversight, teaching and ruling, are, according to the New Testament and the Wesleyan Methodist polity alike, the conjoint and necessary duties of the separated and supported Christian ministry. It is plain from the New Testament that our Lord never meant His Church to be a government of the multitude by the multitude, much less the government of the Pastors by the people.

**Does the Wesleyan Methodist polity recognise the twofold call to the ministry ?**

Wesleyan Methodism rests the claim of any man to the authority as well as the influence of a Pastor on the ground of his twofold call

to the ministry, the call of God and the call of the Church; the latter of which is the recognition of the former. Every candidate for our ministry must avow the consciousness of an inward conviction and constraint which he believes to be wrought in him by the Spirit of God.

The right of the people to approve men before they can be admitted into the ministry is secured by the Wesleyan Methodist system in a most marked manner. No man can enter our ministry without having received the vote of the Quarterly Meeting of the Circuit in which he has lived and exercised his gifts as a Local-preacher. Thus the Primitive concurrence of ministerial initiation, popular approval, and ministerial induction, ordination or appointment, is indispensable to the admittance of any one into the Wesleyan Methodist ministry. Every admitted candidate has, in order to become a Local-preacher, passed the Local-preachers' Meeting. The members of the Quarterly Meeting have opportunities of hearing him during his term of service as a Local-preacher, which does not last less than a year. He then preaches a trial sermon in the principal or some central chapel, to give the members of the Quarterly Meeting a special opportunity of judging of his preaching power. Then his qualifications—intellectual, moral, spiritual, and bodily—are freely discussed by the Quarterly Meeting, of which his Class-leader and his brother Local-preachers are members. Our system of circuit *invitations* to Ministers involves a strong element of popular choice.

**By what sufficient proofs does the Church become cognizant of a man's Divine designation to the ministry of the word?**

The call of the Master has always His threefold signature: special grace, the requisite gifts, and the first-fruits of success.

**But how are this special Grace and these competent Gifts ascertained? And how are the first-fruits of success obtained?**

Certainly no other Church has greater facilities for the discovery of these accompaniments of a Divine call to the ministry. Our social means of grace—our class-meetings, prayer-meetings, lovefeasts, the mutual ministry generally—afford ample opportunities for the manifestation, as well as the maturing, of grace, and our varied modes of service, as Sunday-school Teachers, Leaders, Local-preachers, and the rest, afford suitable facilities for the manifestation and exercise of gifts.

**What further safeguards does Wesleyan Methodism supply against the introduction to the ministry of unfit men?**

The candidate, having passed the Quarterly Meeting, must preach another trial sermon before three selected Ministers of some other Circuit or Circuits in the District, who report thereon to the District Meeting. Then he is searchingly examined by the whole of the Ministers in the District as to his conversion to God, his present religious experience, his Divine call to the ministry, his theological views and convictions, and his theological knowledge. After that he is sent before a Connexional Board of Triers, where he passes through a still more severe examination, first by papers and then *viva voce*. He must send in a written sermon; he must preach another trial sermon before selected members of the District Meeting, who report to the Board of Triers. He has to give in a list of the books he has read, and is examined as to his knowledge of those books. In fact, his intellectual measure is taken, both as to girth and stature, by experts in that kind of work. If he pass this Examination Committee, which reports on each name to the Conference, he is sent, ordinarily for three years, to a branch of our Theological Institution, where he is required to preach stately before his tutors and his fellow-students, and listen to their criticisms; where his religious experience is regularly enquired into; where he is examined yearly by selected outsiders, both by paper and *viva voce*, on the whole range of his studies, and reported on to the Committee. During the four years of his probation he is examined as to his reading by a Board of Examiners chosen by the Conference. Before he can be recommended for ordination he must preach another trial sermon before three Ministers of his District, who report to the District Committee. He is then examined before and by the District Meeting as to his present religious and doctrinal views.

At the next Conference he undergoes a "Private Examination" by the President and two other eminent Ministers; then he is required to appear before "the great congregation," and must be prepared to give a public statement as to his conversion, call to the ministry, and present religious experience. Last of all, he is examined before the Conference. Those only who have passed through these testings, and have watched them and taken part in them year after year, can form an adequate idea how careful and how searching they are. The utmost pains are taken to ensure both the **character** and the **competence** of those to whom the ministry is "committed:" that they be "**faithful men, who shall be**

able to teach others." Assuredly the Wesleyan Methodist presbytery keeps well within the Apostolic injunction: "Lay hands suddenly on no man;" and the man who has passed through all these ordeals, all this training, and through four full years of probationary ministerial service under responsible superintendency is "not a novice." What other Church puts the candidates and probationers for its ministry through so many sifting processes and such a severe system of testing and of training, or affords such opportunities for the manifestation and the development of "grace, gifts, and fruit"? In many other Churches a man's call to the **ministry** is left mainly to his own judgment; it is his "call" to **any particular Church** which is determined by the people. In some Churches—*e.g.*, those of England and of Rome—neither call nor appointment are brought under the cognizance of the members of the Church. The gateway into the ministry is left comparatively unguarded. The various departments of our lay-work in the Church form a kind of **gymnasium** or preparatory school for our Theological Institutions, and one of the most important functions of the Conference is the consideration of the reports of the District Committees and the Boards of Triers as to candidates for the ministry

**But are not these safeguards against the admission of unfit men to the ministry excessive?**

No. The personnel of the ministry is of the greatest importance to the safety and prosperity of the Church. If "whate'er is best administered is best;" whate'er is best officered is best administered. Even under the old dispensation, the very scapegoat was to be sent "into the wilderness" "by the hand of a fit man:" one whose known faithfulness, religiousness, and courage, and his bodily and mental powers marked him out for such a solemn service.

**Had Mr. Wesley Scriptural grounds for resting the claim to obedience and submission to Pastors on the part of the people upon the double call: that of God and that of the people?**

He had. "Son of man, speak unto the children of thy people, and say unto them, . . . The people of the land take a man of their coasts and set him for their watchman, . . . So thou, O son of man, I have set thee for a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at **My mouth**" (Ezek. xxxiii. 2, 7). Thus the

*Liverpool Minutes* most Scripturally conjoin the fact that Wesleyan Ministers are solemnly "put in trust by the Head of the Church" and by the "voluntary association" of the people with them.

But if the people elect a man for the office of Pastor, have they not a corresponding right to determine the limits of his power?

Clearly not; inasmuch as—1. **They** did not create the office. This was done by Christ Himself and His Apostles. 2. Our Lord, in creating the office, defined its responsibilities to **Himself**, and Himself fixed the limit of its powers. This truth is admirably put by John Fletcher in his reply to the famous democratic Congregationalist Dr. Price: "The majority of a certain congregation of Protestants in Bristol expressed a desire to have you for their Pastor, and upon this title you were ordained. But does it follow that your *authority* to preach the Gospel **ascends from your flock to you?** If your congregation insisted on your preaching to them smooth things and prophesying deceits because **they** chose you to be **their** Minister, would you not directly convince them of their folly? Would you not say: 'Gentlemen, though I **am your** Minister, and though I was ordained in consequence of your suffrages, yet, now I am ordained, I have an authority which you never gave nor can give: **I am the Minister of God**, as well as your Pastor?' " (Works, viii., 129).

**Is the paternal character of the Christian Minister, as the house-father over his people, preserved in Wesleyan Methodism?**

In no Church does the parental aspect of pastoral authority, as described in the New Testament, appear with greater prominence. The rule assigned to the Wesleyan Methodist Minister is essentially home-like.

**Are the Scriptural limitations of pastoral authority observed in the Wesleyan Methodist polity?**

They are. A Wesleyan Methodist Minister has not the slightest authority to impose on the people of his charge any doctrinal beliefs not derived from the Word and provable by it. He has "not dominion over" their faith. If he preach anything contrary to Scripture, which is as open to the people as to himself, his people have a ready remedy. A yearly enquiry is made with regard to every Wesleyan Methodist Minister's doctrinal teaching, as also respecting his ministerial character and competence. The collective Pastorate of

Wesleyan Methodism is responsible not only to God, but also to His people, for preserving the purity, the orderly walking, and the soundness in the faith of each individual Minister. No Wesleyan Methodist Society or congregation is without the inexpensive means of speedy relief from any disreputable, wrong-teaching, or wrong-ruling Minister. A Wesleyan Methodist Minister is as amenable to law as is any member of his flock. The Pastors themselves are under a discipline fully as effective as that which guards their people. Those who take the oversight of the flock are themselves the subjects of an oversight more sensitive and stringent still. For this very purpose, amongst others, the Wesleyan Methodist Ministers are compacted into a presbytery solicitously jealous of the purity, the good conduct, the doctrinal and moral soundness, in short the **blamelessness**, of the brotherhood into **full connexion** with which on Ordination each one is impacted. And in the event of wilful neglect, or injurious negligence, or inability for the discharge of his duties on the part of a Minister, "another" will be found to "take his office," with all seemly and charitable speed.

**In the Wesleyan Methodist polity is the exclusion of an immoral or unruly member the conjoint and concurrent act of Pastors and people?**

It is. No one can be expelled without the verdict of the **Leaders' Meeting** of the particular Society to which that member belongs, the Leaders being the proper representatives of the members of the Society. The case must be laid before that meeting, discussed and pronounced on by that meeting, which must **find** the accused either guilty or not guilty; and if guilty—of what? The Leaders' Meeting thus constitutes the **jury** on the case. Of course, the **jury** does not pronounce the sentence; for in civilized jurisprudence a jury does not exercise the functions of a judge. The jury having found the verdict, the judge states what, according to law mercifully administered, is the proper penalty. Should there be, or appear to be, a miscarriage of justice on either side; should the accused think either the verdict or the sentence, or both, unjust, or beyond the proved facts of the case; should the Leaders' Meeting be thought to have not given a verdict according to the evidence adduced; or should the sentence be regarded as either beyond or below the offence of which the member is found guilty, then an appeal may be made to the Conference.

Thus, while, in the **normal** condition of the Church, the **ultimate** responsibility for the preservation of its purity and peace rests with its overseers or Ministers, duly approved and appointed as above described,

yet they are far from assuming the whole responsibility or the entire disciplinary action. In the first instance, the local Society or Church, through its Leaders' Meeting, in which the lay-element greatly predominates, must take thorough judicial cognizance of the discreditable or disturbing misconduct of any member of the Church; and the verdict of the meeting is the necessary basis of the sentence. It is only in the case of a grave miscarriage of justice on the part of the Leaders Meeting or the Superintendent, or both, that the Conference is appealed to to rectify the wrong. And the action of the Superintendent is quite as liable to be reviewed and rectified as that of the Leaders' Meeting. Not only in quiet times, but even in years of the most perilous convulsion, such as the agitation of 1849-52, distinguished Ministers have been rebuked by the Conference for arbitrary or irregular proceedings, and have been required to reinstate members irregularly excluded.

According to the Wesleyan Methodist polity, the right of admitting to or excluding from the Church belongs to neither the Pastors nor the people exclusively. Admission and exclusion are each the joint action of the Minister and the lay-leader, or the Leaders' Meeting.

In no other Church have the people more of real power and prerogative. To support this position the following facts will suffice: In no other Church is the mutual ministry of the people more recognised, guaranteed, insisted on, and carried out; and in no other Church are the gifts of the individual members more utilized. The separated ministry in no wise supersedes the mutual ministry, but, on the contrary, prompts, sustains, and directs it. The view of both the Old and the New Testament as to the main work of an Overseer, Bishop, or Superintendent is carried out in Methodism. What that work is we learn from 2 Chron. ii. 18, where we are told that Solomon set **overseers**—in the Greek version "**bishops**"—"to set the people a **work**."

From Wesley's death to the year 1876, when the Representative Conference was called into existence, there has been a gradual but steady increase of the action and power of the people, in financial affairs, in economic legislation and administration, in disciplinary action, in the election of local and Connexional officers, in the admission of men into the ministry.

The Methodist Minister is in no sense a mediating priest, thrust in between Christ and His people. He is, to use Jeremy Taylor's words, "the hand of God and the hand of the people." In no other Church does the governing body take greater pains to ascertain, and to

carry along with it, and to be in accord with the judgment of the people.

The institution of any new office, according to the *Acts of the Apostles*, belongs to the ministry; the suggestion arises from the emergencies of Church-work. This is well put by Uhlhorn in his *Christian Charity*: "Where new needs make new work necessary, the Lord endows one and another with the gift and the impulse required for such work. It is at first done freely, and afterwards, when it has proved itself permanently needful and efficacious, it gradually passes into a regular office. Every Christian is to be a servant with his gift, and in his circle." This truth is remarkably illustrated by the history of Methodism. Our various home missionary agencies and appliances have originated in this way. In no Church is what Uhlhorn calls "the moral duty of work as an evidence of Christian life" more insisted on.

**Are spiritual and financial affairs sharply and rigidly separated in the Wesleyan Methodist polity, so that Ministers have nothing to do with finance, and laymen no share in spiritual ministrations?**

Far from it. As is "fit" (Acts vi.), Wesleyan Methodist Ministers are disburdened of the financial affairs of the Church, as far as the interests of the Church will admit. The spiritual affairs of the Church are the special and proper charge of the Pastorate. But so long as, and so far as, the interests of the Church require it, Pastors and people have, as they should have, conjoint management of Church finance. And, on the other hand, certain spiritual functions, such as preaching, and the subordinate oversight which Class-leaders exercise, as well as the general mutual ministry, are, as in the Church of Pentecost, exercised by such of the people as are marked out for such work by "the gift of Christ." In Wesleyan Methodism the spiritual and the financial, at various points, overlap each other. The Connexional principle necessitates this co-operation, as is seen in every judicious attempt to connexionalise Congregationalism, as in the managing committees of both the Home and the Foreign Missions of the Congregationalist Churches.

The great powers of Quarterly Meetings—stated and "special"—Leaders' Meetings, Trustees' Meetings, mixed District Meetings, and Representative Conference are recognised rights of the people. The Conference and the people are placed upon a plane of mutual

confidential communication. The admission into Conference of the elective element was of very great importance. The itinerancy is a very popular element; it gives great additional local power and influence to the Quarterly Meetings, as a counterpoise to that of the ministry.

Isaac Taylor well says: "So long as the popular element in Church affairs is fully and freely admitted, clerical authority may safely rest on high and salutary grounds" (*Wesley and Methodism*). The truth of the matter is nobly put in the Westminster Confession: "The powers which Christ hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but to uphold and preserve, one another. They who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, 'resist the ordinance of God.'"

It may safely be affirmed that no system has ever yet been devised for balancing the two essential principles of local and popular rights on the one hand and central pastoral spiritual supervision on the other at once more Scriptural, effective, and well-working than the existing Wesleyan Methodist system.

The local and circuit finance is entirely in the hands of the people, including especially the determination and regulation of the Ministers' maintenance. All financial officers are elected by the people. Connexional finance is, in the District Meetings, of which all the Circuit Stewards are *ex officio* members, in the Representative Conference, and in the Connexional committees under the conjoint care and control of Ministers and laymen. No new regulation becomes Connexional law until it has been submitted to the various Circuit Quarterly Meetings, and assented to by the majority of them. This practically gives to the aggregate Quarterly Meetings a veto on any proposed measure of Conference. It secures to the Quarterly Meetings a real deliberative function as to Connexional legislation, and thus most effectually takes the people along with the Conference, and makes every "decree" the act of "the elders and brethren." The right of memorial and suggestion also gives our people an active share in the initiation of measures, and affords another means whereby the people share in the deliberative and assist in the legislative work of Conference. The consideration of memorials and suggestions is one of the leading **Agenda** of each successive Conference, and important alterations have, in fact, thus originated.

THE END.



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