

THE
PRINCETON REVIEW.

JULY, 1861.

No. III.

ARTICLE I.—*The Kingdom of Christ.**

THE art and mystery of our religious life consists in the exercise of faith. The faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, has, by its nature, a claim to supreme authority in man, and always tends, like the conscience among the moral faculties, towards entire predominance. It proposes, as the most excellent of possible attainments on earth, that we shall walk by faith and not by sight, and becomes in us the power and the desire to live as seeing Him who is invisible.

It is the chief design of the things that are seen to help us in conceiving and enjoying the things that are not seen. Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared in the flesh to aid us in realizing that he lives in the Spirit. The imaginative powers which blend themselves so readily with our religious faith, are stimulated to conceive more vividly what is behind a visible veil, than what is described, as in its nature invisible. The mercy-seat in the Jewish tabernacle, which was veiled from the people,

* The following article is an enlarged form of the discourse of the Rev. Dr. Yeomans, at the opening of the late General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia.

thrifty farms, orchards, and gardens, which had been a proverb and wonder of industry, were becoming wildernesses.”

So much, at least, of the democratic element is indispensable to national prosperity, that the enterprise of the industrial classes shall be more or less free to take its own course, and conscience shall be unconstrained. In these lie the springs of social well-being. Obedience even to an autocrat may not be inconsistent therewith, if the autocrat listens to the popular wants instead of attempting to silence them; but no greater calamity could befall a people under any form of government than that of having the aspirations of its working classes extinguished. Strength runs in the veins of labour. Without enterprise among those who work, and freedom to pursue it and enjoy its gains, the social system must perish for lack of root. And bad as the world is, that part of it which leads the march of civilization, will always value most-highly the freedom of access to God in the manner of his own appointment. However worldly men may fail to perceive the fact, and godless rulers go on to disregard it, the Divine law of liberty revealed in the gospel is the spirit of dominion in the modern world, and no weapon formed against it can prosper.

ART. V.—*Annals of the American Pulpit*, (Methodist.) By WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D. Volume VII. New York: R. Carter & Brothers, 1859.

WHEN the first two volumes of this work appeared, we were delighted to find that it was to be published serially. The task which Dr. Sprague had undertaken seemed to be so immense, that, though we knew he was a man of no ordinary powers, we had serious fears of his being able to complete it, unless he should reach four-score, and retain his mental and physical force unabated. We are both surprised and gratified, when we think of the rapidity with which these stately volumes have followed each other; and all the more, when we consider

the important charge which the author fills, the rare diligence with which the various duties connected with it are discharged, and the other productions of his affluent and graceful pen. His many friends, we are sure, will join us in cordially congratulating him on the appearance of the volume before us, which, in any point of view, will compare with those which have preceded it, and in our earnest desire and prayer that he may be spared to complete these *Annals of the American Pulpit*.

We cannot help feeling peculiar satisfaction when we reflect that a work so truly national in character, and so thoroughly catholic in spirit, was planned, and thus far has been so successfully executed by a minister of our own church. Dr. Sprague has indeed laid all the branches of the evangelical church of our country under great obligations, by his record of the lives and labours of the noble men who have adorned their pulpits, and are now gone to their reward and rest; but he has a special claim on the grateful regards of his own, by this important addition to our Christian biographical literature.

Our previous notices of the earlier volumes of the *Annals*, will have made our readers sufficiently acquainted with their plan. We need, therefore, only to say, that it is continued in the portion of them now before us, except on one point to which the author himself adverts in the Preface. "The work," he says, "is not limited to the Methodist Episcopal Church, but includes a representation from the three most prominent bodies that have successively seceded from it." In adopting this rule, the author we think has acted wisely, and we beg to add, that we rather regret that it could not have been applied to the Congregational and Presbyterian parts of the series.

The number of *Memoirs* in this volume is one hundred and eighty-one, while the letters, illustrative and commemorative, appended to them, amount to two hundred and fifty-eight. Of course, most of those who have contributed their reminiscences are members of the Methodist church, and among them are very many of the most eminent living (or lately living) ornaments of the denomination, viz. Bishops Morris, Janes,

Baker, Kavanagh, Andrews; Doctors Bangs, Deems, Holdich, J. T. Peck, G. Peck, McClintock, Clark, Luckey, Sargent, and Stockton. There are no less than ten letters from the pen of that exemplary Christian patriot and judge, who for so many years adorned the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States, and who has recently gone to his rest, the late Hon. John McLean of Ohio. The large number of his contributions shows how lively an interest he took in the success of this enterprise, and how ready he was, even amid his engrossing and responsible public duties, to help it forward. But the list of those who, in this way, lent it their aid, also includes the names of honored brethren belonging to other sections of the church, among whom are Drs. Mathews, Bethune, Murray, J. N. Campbell, Pinney, Bates, Hall, and Ludlow. Of these, too, as of their Methodist co-labourers, there is occasion to say, "some are fallen asleep." —

With reference to the subjects of the Memoirs, it is hardly necessary to state that the catalogue of them contains all the most illustrious names to be found in the annals of American Methodism; not a few of them being the names of men who have done honour to our common Christianity; men of whom any church might well be proud, or we should rather say, profoundly grateful for the gifts and grace of God in them. The list begins with Phillip Embury, and ends with J. N. Maffit, and it includes the names of nearly if not quite all the pioneers of Methodism, all the departed bishops of the church, all its renowned orators, and a great many less known worthies, whose memory has been happily and deservedly rescued from oblivion. Indeed, as we have gone through these Annals, the well-known lines of Gray have been repeatedly called to mind, as we have read the brief histories of men, whose names we had never heard of, but who, if the accounts given of them by those who were well acquainted with them were to be relied upon, might fitly be called children of genius, as well as ministers of God.

Two of them occur to us, who were contemporaries, one of them a Carolinian, the other a New Englander, both of them refined Christian gentlemen as well as preachers, and both of them subjected to personal outrages which now seem almost

incredible. The first was George Dougherty. He was once asked to preach by the Rev. Dr. Flinn, one of the most eminent Presbyterian ministers of his day in Charleston. Courtesy had obliged him to tender the invitation to his Methodist brother, who was a total stranger to him, and he had a good deal of misgiving as to the result, for Mr. Dougherty was a person of most unpromising visage, tall, lean, awkward, and clothed in very mean apparel. When he began his sermon, Dr. Flinn fixed his eyes upon the floor so that he might not see the ungainly form in the pulpit, but, "in fifteen minutes," said he, "I found myself not only straightened into an erect posture, but absolutely enchained by a burst of eloquence, a mellow blaze of rich thought, as rare as it was overwhelming; and to this day my recollection of George Dougherty places him in the very front rank of American preachers. He filled my ideal of an able minister of the New Testament." This is high praise, by a competent and unprejudiced judge. And yet this man, endowed with gifts and graces so rare, was attacked by a mob in the city of Charleston, and was kept "under the pump" so long as to endanger his life, simply because he was a Methodist preacher. His ministerial career was as brief as it was brilliant—from 1798 to 1807.

The other was Elijah Robinson Sabine, whose ministry, extending from 1799 to 1818, was exercised in eastern New England. Two years of it were spent in Boston, and while there, such men as Dr. Eckley, and his colleague Mr. Huntington of the Old South, Dr. Lathrop of the Old North, Dr. Baldwin of the Baptist, maintained with him the most intimate relations, and held him in the highest esteem. Unlike his southern brother, Mr. Sabine was physically a person of commanding presence, but of a temper gentle, sensitive, high-toned. On the score of personal indignity, however, though their fields of labour were so wide apart, their experience was similar. Mr. Sabine was once felled to the floor with the butt-end of a whip while preaching; at another time he was waylaid; at another he was surrounded by a rabble, blowing horns and trumpets; at another he was silenced by drum and fife; and at another was prevented from performing his service by the shouts and epithets of a raging mob. It should be observed that none of

these disgraceful scenes occurred in Boston. It is strange that such barbarians could have been found in any part of New England. The person so roughly handled was not a half-crazy or eccentric fanatic, nor a rude enthusiast, but a refined scholar, and a preacher of consummate eloquence.

As many of our readers probably have an imperfect knowledge of the wide field from which Dr. Sprague has gathered the materials of his interesting volume, a hasty survey of its history and internal condition may not prove displeasing to them. It is a question still undecided whether the first Methodist church in America was founded by Mr. Embury at New York in 1766, or by Mr. Strawbridge in Maryland in 1764. Some favour one date, some the other. Whichever be adopted, the first century of American Methodism is not yet completed, and yet, at the present moment, there is not a State within the Union which does not contain numerous Methodist societies; nay, it would be difficult to name a single considerable town which has not one or more of them. This is a marvellous growth, especially when we take into account the obstacles that impeded it during its earlier stages, and the fact that it has been so entirely indigenou. During the period reaching from 1764 to 1776, Methodism appears to have gained considerable strength in some of the southern colonies. But when the tie which had bound them to Britain was violently sundered, and the war of the Revolution was seen to be inevitable, the most zealous and efficient evangelists of the new sect were seriously crippled by suspicion of their toryism. With few exceptions, they were Englishmen; most of them abandoned the field and returned to England; and even those who, like Asbury, sympathized with the colonies, and stood their ground, being non-jurors, *i. e.*, unwilling formally to renounce their allegiance to the king, were repeatedly arrested and imprisoned. Mr. Wesley's *Calm Address to the American Colonies*,* in which he maintained the absolute right of Parliament to tax the colonies, with or without their consent, was well fitted to deepen the popular feeling against his societies; and if his influence over them had been as great in political as in religious matters, the

* Miscellaneous Works, iii. 130.

subsequent fortunes of American Methodism might have been widely different from what they were.

On the other hand, this growth has been mainly indigenous, unlike that of the German and Scottish churches; for example, it has never been materially quickened by emigration. England was the only country from whence it could receive nutriment in this mode; and Wesleyanism was working its way there, in the face of bitter opposition, just as Methodism was advancing in America, and among classes of people little inclined to quit the land of their birth.

Two years after the war of the Revolution had closed, 1784-5, the number of ministers was eighty-three, and of members about fifteen thousand. Up to this time, the Methodist preachers had been considered merely as lay-preachers, with no authority to administer ordinances. Their congregations were societies, rather than churches, and their members were consequently dependent upon ministers of other communions for the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. In England, the inconvenience resulting from this state of things was of small account, as the "Societies" were in a certain sense pendicles of the Established church, of which Mr. Wesley was a member. But in this country it was very different, after the recognition of our Independence. It then became perfectly evident that Methodism must assume the form and functions of a church, or come to a speedy end. An earnest appeal was accordingly made to Mr. Wesley, and after some demur on his part, on the 2d of September, 1784, he consecrated Dr. Thomas Coke, a presbyter of the church of England, as Superintendent of the American Societies, and ordained Messrs. Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vesey as elders. These three brethren he sent to America, with instructions to organize the societies into a church after a model framed by himself. Soon after their arrival, 25th of December, 1784, a Conference was held at Baltimore, by which the plan of Mr. Wesley was unanimously adopted—Dr. Coke was recognized as superintendent; Mr. Asbury was elected to the same office; twelve other preachers were ordained as deacons and elders, and three to the order of deacon only. Mr. Wesley had also sent an abridged form of the Book of Common Prayer,

including twenty-five Articles of Religion, and various Rules, suited to a new church, all of which were adopted by the Conference. This, therefore, may be regarded as the date of the organization of the Methodist church in the United States. It went forth to its "work"—to use a Methodist word—with all the fresh, hopeful energy of youth, and speedily it began to gather large numbers into its fellowship.

The first General Conference was held at Baltimore in November, 1792, and its proceedings occasioned the first schism in the newly organized denomination. At the head of the secession was James O'Kelly, a presiding elder in Virginia, the ground of it being the dissatisfaction felt by himself and others with the absolute power of the bishops in stationing the preachers. This schism appears to have been confined to certain parts of Virginia and North Carolina, and never gained much strength. The party gradually dwindled, and ultimately ceased to exist.

The next division in the ranks of American Methodism occurred in 1830. It grew out of the question of lay representation, in what we would call the judicatories of the church, which began to be warmly discussed about the year 1824. During the ensuing six years, vigorous efforts were made by a considerable number of individuals, some of whom were among the most prominent in the body, to bring about what they deemed to be a fundamental reform in the polity of the church, *i. e.*, to give the lay membership their due weight in her Local and other Conferences. The dispute waxed so earnest, that the leaders in this movement were expelled from the main body, and, in conjunction with others who seceded from it, established a new society, under the name of the *Methodist Protestant Church*. No change was made in the doctrinal articles, as held by the old church, nor in the form of government, except the abolition of the episcopacy, and the introduction of the lay element into the General and Quarterly Conferences. It began in 1830 with eighty-three ministers and about five thousand members; in 1858 there were two thousand stationed ministers, twelve hundred churches, and ninety thousand members.

Another secession occurred in 1843, which took the name of the *Methodist Wesleyan Connection*. It was caused by

differences of opinion respecting church government, slavery, and total abstinence from intoxicating drinks. The new body was organized at a General Convention of dissatisfied Methodists, held at Utica, N. Y., in May, 1843. All who buy or sell men and women as slaves, or who claim that it is right so to do, all who make, buy and sell, or use, or knowingly aid others in the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors, except for mechanical or medicinal purposes, are excluded from church fellowship. This body is the most democratic section of Methodism, each church having power to act for itself, while its several Conferences consist of an equal number of ministers and laymen. In 1858 there were three hundred preachers, and twenty thousand members, reported as in the connection. It has also two colleges under its control, viz., Michigan Union College, and the Illinois Institute.*

The Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1845, was split into two grand sections, one of which has been since, and is now known as the Methodist Episcopal Church *South*. Of course, the sole cause of this division was slavery. The immediate occasion of it was the passage, by the General Conference of that year, of some moderate resolutions designed to keep the episcopacy free of slavery. Up to this time no bishop had held slaves, though some of them were Southern by birth and residence. In 1844 the fact that one of the bishops, the Rev. Dr. Andrew, of Georgia, had become by marriage the owner of slaves, was brought to the notice of the General Conference, and after a protracted debate, it was resolved that he should desist from exercising the functions of his office so long as he was thus connected with slavery. The result of this action, as already intimated, was that thirteen of the Annual Conferences in the South and South-west, withdrew and formed a new organization under the name of the *Methodist Episcopal Church South*.

Previous to this division, the Methodist Episcopal Church had seven bishops, forty Conferences, four thousand and four hundred and seventy-nine travelling preachers, eight thousand

* There is a striking analogy between the history of Methodism and that of Scottish Presbyterianism. Both have been split into parties strongly opposed to each other. Both are very familiar with secession, but the cause of these divisions have been simply points of discipline, and not articles of doctrine.

and one hundred local preachers, and one million, one hundred and thirty-nine thousand, five hundred and eighty members. In 1860, it had six bishops, fifty-one Annual Conferences, six thousand nine hundred and eighty-seven travelling preachers, eight thousand one hundred and eight local preachers, nine thousand seven hundred and fifty-four churches, and nine hundred and ninety-four thousand, four hundred and forty-seven members.

The Southern church now numbers twenty-four Annual Conferences, two thousand six hundred and sixty-seven travelling preachers, including six bishops; over five thousand local preachers, and seven hundred and twenty thousand members, white, negro, and Indian.

The government of both branches of the Methodist church is, as the name indicates, Episcopal, and as many of our readers are unfamiliar with its several parts, we append a summary account of it, derived from the Historical Introduction prefixed to this volume. The *Society* consists of all the church members in a particular locality. The *Class* originally contained twelve persons, but now is often much larger. It is under the care of a *Class-leader*, who meets with it once a week for religious purposes, and who also gathers what each individual is willing to give for the support of the church. The *Stewards* have charge of the fund collected for the maintenance of the ministry and the poor, and disburse it according as the Discipline directs. The *Trustees* hold the real estate and the church edifice, and are elected by the people in such manner as the statutes of the States, or the Discipline provide. *Exhorters* are licensed by the Quarterly Meeting, and are authorized to hold meetings for exhortation and prayer. A *Local Preacher* usually follows some secular calling, and preaches without compensation, except when filling the place of the *Travelling Preacher*, who is devoted to the work of the ministry, and is supported, like any other pastor, by the people. A *Supernumerary Preacher* is one disabled for effective service, but who still has an appointment, and labours according to his ability. A *Superannuated Preacher* is one disabled by feeble health, or by old age, from effective duty. A *Deacon* is ordained by a bishop, and has authority

to preach, baptize, and assist the Elder or Travelling Preacher in administering the Lord's Supper, and to perform the rite of marriage. A *Presiding Elder* is appointed by the Bishop, and has charge of a district containing several circuits and stations. It is his duty to visit each of these circuits once a quarter, to preach, and to preside in the Quarterly Conference, which is composed of all the Preachers, Local and Travelling, the Exhorters, Stewards, and Class-leaders of his district. A *Bishop* is elected by the General Conference, and is consecrated to office by three Bishops, or by one Bishop and two or more Elders, or if there be no Bishop living, by any three Elders designated for the service. He, however, has no defined diocese, but travels through "the work" at large, superintends the affairs of the church, temporal and spiritual, presides in the Annual Conferences, ordains such persons as may be elected by these Conferences to the order of Deacons or Elders, and appoints the Preachers to their respective charges. For his official conduct he is responsible to the General Conference alone. A *Leader's Meeting* consists of the Class-leaders and the Stewards of a circuit, and is presided over by the Preacher in charge. Here the weekly collections of the classes are paid to the Stewards, inquiry is made into the state of the classes, the sick, the poor, and delinquents are reported. A *Quarterly-Meeting Conference* is composed of all the Local and Travelling Preachers, Exhorters, Stewards, and Class-leaders, within a given district. It is presided over by the Presiding Elder; Exhorters and Local Preachers are licensed by it; and suitable persons are nominated by it to the office of Deacon or Elder. It also hears appeals of individual church members from the decisions of committees by whom they have been tried for any delinquency. The *Annual Conference* consists of all the Travelling Preachers, Deacons, and Elders, within a State or other large territory. It examines, each year, into the character of the Travelling Preacher; admits or continues on trial applicants to be received into the travelling connection; hears appeals of Local Preachers, and names those who are to be ordained Elders and Deacons. It, therefore, has original jurisdiction over all its members, and may try, acquit, suspend,

or expel him, according to the Discipline. The *General Conference* is a delegated body, its members being chosen by the Annual Conferences. It is the highest judicatory of the church, and meets once in four years.

Such then is the interior economy of the field—if we may use the expression—over which the author of this volume has travelled, undeterred by its immensity, and the manifold difficulties incident to his enterprise, that he might garner and preserve the fast-decaying memorials of the sainted dead. As we have before intimated, he has succeeded in saving from forgetfulness the names of a great multitude of faithful heralds of the cross, the story of whose toils, and sufferings, unquenchable zeal, unwearied labours, and singular success, may well be read and pondered by those who are reaping a rich harvest from the seed sown by them. For our Methodist brethren this volume will, of course, have a special interest, as it has a special claim upon their regards; but it abounds with incidents pregnant with lessons which may be profitably studied by ministers of every name, who would learn how to “endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” The first generation of Methodist ministers was composed of men, any one of whom almost might be taken as an example of some of the noblest qualities of the evangelist. Bishop Asbury, for instance, was an Englishman by birth and education. If he had followed the example of most of his fellow-labourers when the Revolution began, he would unquestionably have become a Wesleyan of mark and influence in his native land. But he resolved to stay in the struggling Colonies, and watch over the infant societies, at the certain cost of great trials and sacrifices. At one of the gloomiest periods of our national history, 1785–7, he projected a literary institution in Maryland; but which, after having been twice burnt to the ground, was abandoned, the disheartened Asbury mournfully exclaiming, “I feel convinced that our call is not to build colleges.”

For forty-five years, this indefatigable pioneer of Methodism may be said to have lived in the saddle and the pulpit. In 1812, when seventy-one years old, he presided over nine Conferences, was present at ten camp-meetings, travelled six thousand miles, preaching almost daily, although his physical

system was so feeble, often so utterly prostrated, that his friends were compelled to lift him into and out of his carriage. His last sermon was preached from Rom. ix. 28, on Sunday the 24th of March, 1816; and seven days afterward he entered into rest. He was never married, and in his journal, 26th of January, 1804, he thus explains how it happened: "If I should die in celibacy, which I think quite probable, I give the following reasons for what can scarcely be my choice: At twenty-one I travelled, and at twenty-six I came to America. Thus far I had reasons enough for a single life. At thirty-nine I was ordained Superintendent Bishop in America. Among the duties imposed upon me by my office, was that of travelling extensively; and I could hardly find a woman with grace enough to enable her to live but one week out of fifty-two with her husband. Besides, what right has any man to take advantage of the affections of a woman, make her his wife, and by a voluntary absence, subvert the whole order of the married state, by separating those whom neither God nor nature permit long to be put asunder?" From the reminiscences of those who knew Bishop Asbury, it appears that he was a man for whom domestic life would have had peculiar charms; yet for the sake of "the work," he denied himself these, in every form in which he might have enjoyed them.

But the man who strikes us as the most remarkable among the pioneers of American Methodism, is Dr. Thomas Coke—a name second only to that of the venerable founder of the denomination. "He was," says Mr. Thacher, "one of the finest models of the Christian gentleman whom I remember ever to have met with. His voice was melody itself, and his whole manner was bland and attractive." Coke, like Wesley, was a scholar of Oxford, an ordained clergyman of the church of England, and for several years prior to his connection with the Wesleyan movement, he had ministered at her altars as curate of Petherton. He came to America in 1784, with a commission from Mr. Wesley to organize the societies in this country into a distinct and independent body. He was unanimously accepted as General Superintendent; and having accomplished the immediate design of his mission, he made an extensive tour through the United States, and, in conjunction with his col-

league, Mr. Asbury, he laid the foundation of the first Methodist College that was ever established in this or any other land. As an Englishman, he naturally felt a warm sympathy for those unfortunate colonists, whose adherence to the royal cause had obliged them to seek new homes in the inhospitable regions of Nova Scotia; and under the influence of this feeling he returned to England, with a special view to awaken an interest on their behalf. Having secured three missionaries, in October 1786, he embarked for Nova Scotia, in a ship commanded by a captain who proved to be a very brutal fellow; and after encountering a succession of terrific gales, which drove them far from their course, they landed on the Island of Antigua. Brought thus providentially to the West Indies, Coke at once addressed himself to an inspection of the field which had been so unexpectedly opened to him, and spent many months in going from island to island. He reached Charleston, South Carolina, the 28th of February, 1787; and after a short stay in that city, where he had excited some animosity against himself, during his previous visit, by his free opinions regarding slavery, but which, in the interval, seems to have died away, he travelled northward to Philadelphia, preached his farewell sermon, and set sail for England, in the hope of meeting the British Conference, which he was happily enabled to do.

The limits of this article will not allow us to follow Bishop Coke through the perpetual journeyings, by land and sea, which occupied the remainder of his busy life. If not incessantly in motion, he was constantly at work, "stooping to the very drudgery of charity, and gratuitously pleading the cause of a perishing world from door to door." He made eighteen passages across the Atlantic, and at last, when he had finished his course, he found a grave in the middle of the Indian ocean. In 1805, he called upon a Miss Smith, of Bristol, a lady of large fortune and eminent piety, and asked from her a donation for the cause of missions. She not only gave him her money, but her hand. They were married in April of that year, but even domestic life could not charm him into inactivity. His heart seems to have been specially set upon carrying the gospel to regions where Christ had not been preached, and, in the words of Adam Clark, "the convulsive effort which ter-

minated his days, was a missionary exertion to carry the gospel to the heathen." In 1814, though in his sixty-ninth year, he planned a mission to India, to be established by himself and seven brethren who had volunteered to accompany him, and generously offered to bear the whole expense of their outfit, amounting to £6000. The company sailed from Portsmouth, but the venerable evangelist entered into his rest before the voyage was ended. He died suddenly at sea, May 3, 1814, and, as we have before said, his grave is in the middle of the Indian ocean. It is proper for us to add, that Dr. Coke's pen was as active as his tongue. He was, in fact, a voluminous author; and we wonder how a man living such a life could write so much and write so well.

Asbury and Coke are historical names, known and honoured far beyond the limits of the sect which they did so much to establish; but there are others that might also be styled historical, although their fame has been confined within the bounds of their own denomination. In Methodist circles, the names of Freeborn Garretson, Jesse Lee, Ezekiel Cooper, William McKendree, Enoch George, and other departed worthies are "familiar as household words," and richly do they deserve to be thus embalmed for their labours of love. We would gladly draw upon the *Annals* for incidents illustrative of their personal characters, of the fields they cultivated, and their various achievements, but we must quit the tempting theme.

The origin and progress of Wesleyan Methodism form the staple of one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of the church since the Reformation. They illustrate and confirm the doctrine of Divine Providence as we hold it, but which many of our Methodist brethren are hardly willing to accept, viz., God's powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions. The half-dozen Oxonians who used to meet in Lincoln College for prayer and conference, and whose methodical piety rendered them "a peculiar people" in the University, little dreamed of the immense harvest that should grow from the handful of corn planted by themselves on the top of the mountain, in the arctic zone of Oxford. If they could have anticipated that they were preparing the way for the birth of a new sect, it is quite probable

that their prejudices as Anglican churchmen would have been greatly shocked, and that they would have promptly abandoned those methods of religious culture and of active benevolence which contained the seeds of schism. But, as usual, God led them by a way which they knew not, the outgate of which they could not see. They originated a religious movement which some of them afterwards would have gladly stopped, but this was beyond the power of man to accomplish, for the hand of the Lord was in it.

At the time when the new sect was born, the Reformed church in nearly all her branches, in Europe and America, had sunk into a state of great spiritual deadness. The intense excitement in regard to religious matters awakened by the Reformation, and perpetuated in England by the struggles of the Puritan and the Nonconformist for freedom of conscience and purity of worship, was succeeded by, if it did not itself produce, a sort of reaction not unlike the ennui that follows some extraordinary physical or mental exertion. Such undoubtedly was the case of the British churches. In the Church of Scotland those influences were at work which culminated in the dreary reign of Moderatism. Among the fifteen or eighteen thousand clergymen of the English establishment, Mr. Romaine, of London, a contemporary of the Wesleys, declared that, at the beginning of his ministry, he could not count twenty faithful preachers of the gospel. The parsons Trulliber and Jolter of fiction were in truth the representatives of multitudes who in that age ministered at the altars of the Anglican church. Episcopalians themselves, Tractarians even, have confessed that the spiritual condition of that church during the greater part of the eighteenth century was fearful. Indeed one of the most dismal pictures of the period that we remember to have seen, will be found in one of the Tracts for the Times. Among the Dissenters, too, there were signs of spiritual declension. The once glorious Presbyterian church of England had not only lost her ancient fervor, but opened her doors for the admission of the deadly heresy which denies the Lord that bought us.

No man knew better than Mr. Wesley himself how profound was the ignorance, how deep was the moral degradation, of the

masses of the English people, and how intense was the hatred which dignitaries and curates, lords and squires, with few exceptions, felt for the gospel of Christ and for living religion. There was not a county in England which he did not visit, bearing the glad tidings of redemption; and there was not a county in which he did not encounter the heathenism of the lower classes, and the hatred of the higher. But nothing could induce him to set up the standard of schism, or to become a seceder from the Church of England, into whose holy orders he had been admitted. The earnest desire of his heart was to maintain his loyalty to her, while he was attempting to accomplish a work to which he was sure his Lord had called him, but which she either would not or could not perform. Mr. Wesley was too keen witted not to perceive and appreciate the opportunity afforded of becoming the founder of a new denomination. He had in a preëminent degree the very gifts that qualify a man for such an enterprise. He did ultimately occupy that position; but we deem it due to him to say, that it was rather forced upon him than sought by him. If the Lavingtons, Warburtons, Hurds, Lowths, and other occupants of the Episcopal bench, had comprehended the wants of their times, and had reciprocated the spirit which Mr. Wesley evinced to his dying day, how different had been the subsequent history of Methodism and of the Church of England. But instead of sympathy, he met only the most determined hostility; while he was striving with all his might to keep his "societies" within the bosom and under the guardianship of his mother church, her lordly dignitaries were labouring pertinaciously to drive him and them from her pale. And so Wesleyan Methodism became, what it is now, one of the recognized churches of evangelical Christendom.

Though its origin is comparatively so recent, it has long been one of the most numerous and powerful of Protestant denominations. To what cause is this surprising growth to be ascribed? In one view the question admits of an easy answer. It is the Lord's doing. He had a great work to accomplish—the work of reviving a declining church; of rousing professing Christians from the spiritual lethargy into which they had sunk; of conveying life and grace to the thousands of heathen

within the limits of Christendom; and he called and qualified the instruments needed to attain these ends. But the inquiry may still be made into the special means and agencies by which these ends were effected. In other words, What gave to Methodism its peculiar power? What was it that enabled Wesley, Asbury, Coke, Lee, McKendree, and their compeers, to win such glorious spiritual triumphs?

Our Methodist friends doubtless will say, that this result is to be attributed to their emancipation, or their freedom from the trammels of Calvinism. We have reason to believe that not a few of those good old Methodist preachers, who are now with the saints made perfect, were very much given—much more, we think, than most of those who are now prosecuting their “work”—to denouncing certain “horrible dogmas of the Presbyterian Confession,” such as election, perseverance of the saints, irresistible grace, &c. They gloried in their Arminianism. But for all that, we make bold to affirm that the spiritual power which their ministry unquestionably possessed, was derived from the earnestness, the plainness, the unction with which they proclaimed the essential doctrines of that very Calvinism which they so frequently and vigorously vituperated. Man’s ruin by the fall; his native depravity and alienation from God; his absolute need of a Saviour, and utter inability to save himself; the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit; justification, not by works, but by faith alone in the blood and righteousness of Jesus; the free offer of salvation to every human being, without money and without price; the necessity of holiness, not to merit heaven, but to become meet for it—these articles constituted the very burden of their preaching. And in every really Calvinistic pulpit that ever existed, or is now to be found on the face of the earth, these are the precious truths that have been and are preached every Sabbath-day. We honour and love the Methodist church for the tenacity with which her ministers, from the days of Wesley until now, have held fast to these essential elements of the faith once delivered to the saints—the faith for which Calvin contended so earnestly; the faith which thousands of Calvinists have confessed on the scaffold and at the stake; but the faith which Arminians, properly so called, in Holland, Germany,

England, America, have reprobated and rejected as dishonouring alike to God and to man. And those articles which our Methodist friends have so often and so heartily denounced, but which, when they attempt to state them, they rather disfigure than describe, are only the logical consequences of the very doctrines which they and we hold and preach in common.

They call themselves Arminians; but it is perfectly obvious that their theology differs as widely from that of Limborch, and Whitby, and Warburton, and all the recognised Arminian divines of Holland and of England, as it does from Calvinism. They differ widely and radically in principles and in results; whereas, when we hear the gospel preached by a Methodist, we feel that it is the very same to which we love to listen, and are accustomed to hear as Presbyterians. And when we read the records of Methodist religious experience, we meet with essentially the same type of piety as that which is fashioned under Presbyterian preaching—the same love, faith, and hope—and often the confession of the very truth which, when stated in a dogmatic form, was the object of the strongest antipathy. Indeed, we have been often half-amused as well as delighted, to notice the inconsistency between the prayers of many a worthy Methodist, or the account of his experience at the love-feast—his self-renunciation, his magnifying the riches of Divine grace, his confidence in God for the future—and his speculative theology.

But besides the truth proclaimed, the kind and character of the men who proclaimed it should be taken into account, when considering the causes of the rapid spread of Methodism. Untrained in the schools, they could say, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we." Most of them were taken from the people; they were in sympathy with the people; they comprehended their modes of thinking; and therefore their sermons, though not constructed according to the rules of art, though often wanting in tastefulness and order, proved themselves to be true and effective *conciones ad populum*. A successor of Sir Isaac Newton, Dean Milner, himself one of the greatest preachers of his day in Cambridge, described them as of "the slapdash sort of sermons," and enthusiastically added, "it is the sort that does all the good." They were not dissertations,

nor-essays; they never attempted grand argumentation, refined analysis, nor metaphysical speculation; but were the utterances of hearts which had felt the agony of conviction, and the bliss of forgiveness; which had been shaken with terror by the awful thunders of Sinai, and had been melted into penitence and love beneath the cross, by the sight of a Saviour who had given himself for them. The necessities of the "work" were urgent; the Macedonian cries which reached the ears of Mr. Wesley were many, as well as loud; and he evinced his rare talent for handling bodies of men, to use a military phrase, by the methods he used to obtain co-workers. If a convert had graces and gifts fitting him for public service, he very soon found a sphere within which to exercise them. The latent abilities of the "societies" were developed, and devoted to the "work." Such has been the wise policy of the Methodist church. She has turned to good account the spiritual and natural endowments of her members, as class-leaders, exhorters, or local preachers. She has encouraged her gifted laymen to "speak unto the people;" but she at the same time subjects them to suitable tests, and controls them by the rules of discipline. Hence, in her early days, whenever a society was formed, most if not all of those who composed it, like the scattered Christians of Jerusalem, in one way or another did the work of evangelists; and no wonder, therefore, that in her early annals we find the names of so many men who, though they never enjoyed the culture of the schools, rose to be truly mighty and successful preachers.

Our exhausted space forbids our discussing, as fully as we could wish, that distinctive institution of Methodism, viz., its itinerant ministry. This much, however, we may say, that considering the kind of work to which Mr. Wesley felt that he was called, and the character of the instruments he was obliged to employ, he showed great practical wisdom when he provided for his societies an itinerant, rather than a fixed pastorate. We are inclined to believe that its itinerancy has been one of the chief means of keeping the Methodist church so free of those speculative tendencies which have revealed themselves, more or less, in other prominent denominations; and we are persuaded

also, that some of the peculiar traits of Methodist piety are to be ascribed to this cause. Under a pastorate changed every two years, it seems to us unreasonable to look for the staid and sober type of Christian character, for a church not content with the *disjecta membra* of the faith, but demanding the systematic exposition of the books of Scripture and of the doctrines founded on them; we should rather expect to find Christians, not indeed ignorant or indifferent to gospel truth, but fond of excitement, and, provided the masses around them are roused to seek religion, indisposed to criticise severely the means by which the result is produced.

We will only add that the Methodist movement deserves to be studied, not only as one of the great events of the past century, but because its history may suggest hints as to the best method of dealing with some of those problems which are now forcing themselves upon the attention of the church. Within the most Christian parts of Christendom "there remaineth yet much land to be possessed;" there are huge masses of heathenism to be reclaimed. How can they be reached? Under the pressure of this question, Presbyterian Scotland, of late years, has lent her sanction to agencies which her Bostons, Erskines, and Browns, would have rejected, as against the "good order of Christ's house." Only a year ago the General Assembly of the Free Church formally recognised the Episcopalian and layman Brownlow North as an evangelist. Radcliff, Grant, Winter, Hammond, and others baptized with the same spirit, men taken from the highest and lowest ranks of society, though unordained by the laying on of hands of prelate or Presbytery, are welcomed to pulpits of almost every name, that they may tell to listening thousands what God hath done for their souls. It is a sign of the times, and it behooves us to ask, whereunto this thing shall grow? The careful perusal of the volume before us may help us to give the right answer to the question.