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AN ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

Historical Societies

OF THE

Upper South Carolina Conference
Gaffney, S. C.

AND

South Carolina Conference
Marion, S. C.

NOVEMBER 7, 1922
NOVEMBER 28, 1922

By REV. M. M. BRABHAM

THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE IN THE METHODIST MOVEMENT

The above caption represents the subject of this paper—a paper not intended as an original essay on Methodism, but rather a compilation of historical facts and comments on that great subject, gathered from various sources. In using the material so gathered I shall not in every case state the source of my information, but due acknowledgment appears in the paper itself under quotation marks.

As my paper consists so largely of quotations, there will appear occasional partial repetitions, this because the main point in the quotation is sometimes so closely allied with the surplusage that an omission of the latter would spoil the sense of the whole. Also due to the same cause, the paper as it is read will be found lacking in that rhythm or smoothness that might be found in a purely original composition. This fault, however, is offset by the guaranty of historical accuracy in verbatim quotation; to say nothing of the advantage retained in the language and expression of expert writers. Calling attention beforehand to these unavoidable defects will, I trust, prepare the audience to excuse the same.

Again, the term Methodism will be found to have a large place in this paper, this necessarily so. However, it must be borne in mind that the achievements attributed to what we call Methodism, are not claimed to be the results of Methodism per se; for Methodism in itself is but a name and an accident. The credit for the success of Methodism is due to the thing for which Methodism stands—i. e., Primitive Christianity, or supernatural spiritual religion as revealed in the word of God.

In the discussion of this subject—a subject universally recognized, and frequently mentioned in Methodist literature—I shall be plain and straightforward

in my statements and claims regarding my subject. Meantime I wish it distinctly understood that no disparagement of the work or value of any other Christian body is intended or implied. In the providence of God His Church has become divided and sub-divided into many evangelical denominations, each and all of which have their respective places and rights in the work of evangelizing the world.

With these several points clearly understood, I proceed to the subject under discussion—“The Hand of Providence in the Methodist Movement.”

Horace Bushnell is quoted as saying that “the world is governed supernaturally in the interests of Christianity.” Apropos of this statement I quote as follows from a definition of Providence given by the late Dr John T. Wightman in the *Methodist Quarterly Review*, July 1892: “Providence is not power adjusted simply in the order of goodness, nor is it law working under the eye of the absolute, mere force put to service for beneficial ends. It is more. It is Christ in law, it is His love at work in nature, and His love not only controls law, it becomes itself a law; and like a lubricating influence inserts a new power into the fretting mechanism of human society to accelerate the progress of life toward universal happiness . . . It is the unseen priesthood of Jesus silently introducing the Spirit of God to take possession of the whole world. . . God’s providence nicely times the advent even of an insignificant occurrence often to bring about the rising or setting of an empire as if by accident.” This is illustrated in the shower that delayed Napoleon in bringing up his heavy artillery at Waterloo—which failure resulted in his downfall.

I

That God “nicely timed” the coming of Methodism may be seen in the literary and moral aspects of England at the time of its birth. Concerning this condition

I quote as follows from an old book published in 1849—the work of a superannuate Methodist preacher: “The infidel works of Hobbs, Tindal, Shaftsbury and Chubb were in full circulation, and were powerfully reinforced by the appearance of the three greatest giants in the course of speculative error which modern times have produced—Bolingbroke, Hume and Gibbons. . . . The encyclopedists had attempted the infernal project of eradicating from the whole circle of the sciences every trace of Christian truth; and the polite writers of France headed by Voltaire and Rousseau, had decked the corrupt doctrines of the day with all the attractions of eloquence and poetry, humor and satire, until they swept like a sirocco in tempest over the nation, withering not only the sentiment of religion, but the instincts of humanity, and subverting at last in common ruin, the altar, the throne and the sacred precincts of domestic life. This literary degeneracy and its evil effects on society brought about a state of alarm by which such men as Steele, Addison, Berkeley and Johnson were moved to attempt a counter movement to check the general declension in manners and morals resulting from the pernicious writings of those previously quoted. The latter writers mentioned, however, aimed at first more at the follies than at the sins of the times. They grew serious, however, as they grew important. . . . And while these writers exerted an influence upon the tastes and morals of the age, it was comparatively superficial . . . and had nothing to do with those great evangelical truths which are the vital elements of Christianity, in which inheres its renovating energy. It is the diffusion of these truths among the popular masses of the people that alone can effect any general and permanent elevation of men. It was reserved for the agency of Methodism to revive and spread them with a transforming efficiency through the British Empire, and most of the civilized world; and the above writers are referred to

only as evidences of the conviction felt by the better disposed literary leaders of the day, that some new check was necessary to stop the overwhelming progress of vice. There is no single evidence that spiritual Christianity was at all comprehended by the mass, and perhaps no better by the elevated few. . . . The higher classes laughed at piety, the lower classes were grossly ignorant and abandoned to vice; while the church, enervated by the universal decline, was not able any longer to give countenance to the down-fallen cause of truth. . . . Watts called upon all who had the cause of God at heart to use all possible efforts for the recovery of dying religion in the world." Another says, "I cannot look on without the deepest concern, when I see the imminent ruin which hangs over the Church"; and this ruin, he adds, "threatens the whole Reformation."

"At the time of this distressing condition Methodism, represented in the Holy Club at Oxford, was raised up, and was destined, under God, to kindle a flame that would not only set England in a blaze, but extend to the ends of the earth. God was preparing Wesley, Whitefield, and their coadjutors to meet the crisis; and in the clouds of that dark period He wrote, as with their own lightnings, the date of a new epoch in the history of the Church."

So that this "timely" origination of the Methodist movement to meet the exigencies of the times was providential, is clearly manifest.

II

In the second place we note the hand of Providence in the preparation of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley.

Profane history has its Alexander, who never knew defeat; its Caesar, called the foremost man of the world; its Napoleon, designated as the man of destiny. These, with innumerable others, have a large place in

human history; but as is represented in a significant picture prefacing a certain book of history, while the conquerors are shown marching in great pageantry, on either side the way is strewn with human skeletons—a fitting emblem of human glory. Whereas, the glory of the heroes of the Cross, those who dispense the waters of life—their glory lies in the fact that “every thing shall live whither the water cometh.”

Of special note among the latter class are Moses and Amos, John the Baptist, and St. Paul, Savonarola and Martin Luther; each of whom, with numerous others, was providentially prepared for their respective parts in the work of the Church of God. Of singular importance among such providential men is John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. This man is said to have had “a genius for holiness,” a genius which had its origin in his more immediate ancestors. His grandfather, John Wesley, in whose history one writer says may be found the epitome of later Methodism, was himself a preacher and an evangelist. Wesley’s father, Samuel Wesley, also was a preacher whose fullest sympathies were with his sons, John and Charles, in their God-appointed field of labor. While the sons were at college the father wrote: “Go on in God’s name, in the path which your Saviour has directed you. Walk as prudently as you can, but not fearfully, for my heart and prayers are yours.”

As to the mother of John Wesley, the mistress of the Epworth parsonage—“a household that seems to have been providentially fitted for preparing Christian instruments, instruments fit for the Kingdom of God”—of her one has said, “in that quiet chamber at Epworth, kneeling at the feet of God, the prayers of John Wesley’s mother opened the channel for the pentecostal floods that were to flow over the earth in these latter days; that the origin, under God, of the mighty Methodist throng lay at the heart of Susannah Wesley.” “Such a woman,” says Adam Clarke, “take

her all in all, I have not read of, nor with her equal have I been acquainted. Such a family I have never read of, heard of, or known; nor since the days Abraham and Sarah, and of Joseph and Mary of Nazareth, has there been a family to whom the human race has been more indebted." "Susannah Wesley molded the man who is molding the nations."

John Wesley's "genius for holiness" led him to seek with all the fervor of his soul, this coveted religious state; but outside his immediate circle the religious atmosphere was against him. However the hand of God brought him into contact with Spangenberg and other Moravian Christians through whom he was put into the way that led to his conversion. As the historian puts it, "The meeting of the Wesleys (with the Moravians) seemed to be casual, but it was in fact one of those providential occasions out of which most momentous consequences arise. At the very time when harrassed by persecutors, and perplexed at the state of his own heart, John Wesley resolved to return (from Georgia) to his native land, the heads of the Moravian Church in Germany were making arrangements to send a pious and gifted evangelist to America, and directed him to pass through England. Little did they imagine what consequences would arise out of the fulfillment of their plans. The hand of God was in it. The man selected for this service was Peter Bohler, who arrived in London just in time to impart the evangelical instruction that Wesley and his brother so much needed." This was February, 1738; in May following the Wesley brothers were soundly converted, and thus the founder of Methodism, through the hand of providence, received his highest qualification for the work which God had for him to do. It has been wisely said that "there is great hope for any reform which begins in the heart of the prospective reformer"—a saying abundantly justified in the life and work of John Wesley.

It was evidently designed of God that the founder of Methodism should be a man of learning. First his native talents were unusual, capable of keen culture and broad expansion. To meet their predetermined purpose these talents must be cultivated. And so, notwithstanding the Wesleys had been brought up in the parsonage of a minister, the size of whose family was out of proportion to that of his stipend, they, nevertheless, had enjoyed the benefits of scholarships, fellowships, and institutes of learning, which, under God, fully equipped them in this respect for their life work. Of John Wesley's scholarship it has been said, "There was not in England a man of finer and broader education than John Wesley. He knew the best to be had at Oxford. He had spent five years there as an undergraduate; nine years more had been spent in Lincoln College as Moderator of Disputations, Lecturer of Greek Literature, and preacher to the University; six years more had been spent as traveling Academic Fellow, both in the old world and in the new. He was familiar with the best educational institutions of Germany and the Continent. Then after his fourteen continuous years at Oxford he sketched the plan of Kingswood School, and boldly declared of it that 'whoever carefully goes through this course will be a better scholar than nine out of ten of the graduates of Oxford or Cambridge.' This declaration neither Oxford nor Cambridge undertook to deny. Indeed, in respect to the modern languages, and some other matters, it took Oxford and Cambridge a full hundred years to come up to the breadth of Mr. Wesley's ideas in 1741." (Wm. F. Warren in *Methodist Quarterly Review*, January, 1891.) Again, an important item in the great founder's equipment was a catholic spirit. Concerning this I quote as follows: "Perhaps no man in modern times has exhibited the beauty of Christian charity more constantly and consistently than John Wesley. Names were nothing to him, if the

heart was in the right place. Naturally for the pious man of his own church, he had the most cordial greeting. But German Lutheran, or Moravian, Dutch Calvinist, French Huguenot, pious Romanist, or Spiritual Greek, Dissenter or high Churchman—low Church, or broad Church—all were the same to him if they satisfied him that their life was hid with Christ in God; if they named the name of Jesus in spiritual verity, they were brethren beloved, and he received them into the community of his own soul."

Also Mr. Wesley was gifted in the executive qualities that mingled business and worship, thus being prepared of the Lord for temporal and spiritual things alike. Lastly, as to physical endurance—this was phenomenal, a vitality which enabled him to perform an almost incredible amount of mental labor, and to undergo an astonishing amount of physical exertion—and this down to extreme old age. Note this from his last birth-day record, June 28, 1790: "This day I enter my 88th year. For about 86 years I found none of the infirmities of old age; my eyes did not wax dim, neither was my natural force abated. But last August I found almost a sudden change . . . But I feel no pain from head to foot; only it seems nature is exhausted." February 24, 1791, he arose at 4:00 a. m., went to his appointment eighteen miles from London and preached his last sermon, dying six days later."

Of this most remarkable man, Dr. John J. Tigert, afterwards Bishop Tigert, writing in the *Quarterly Review*, October, 1903, says: "John Wesley was the most widely useful and influential, and therefore historically, the most important and conspicuous personage of the England of the eighteenth century. No sovereign or soldier, or statesman, no author or reformer, or ecclesiastic, has more directly, palpably and powerfully affected English life and welfare than John Wesley. But Wesley has more widely affected America than England, through the agency of the greatest evangeli-

cal Church in the United States, which owes both its missionary foundation, and its episcopal organization directly to him. When our horizon is thus enlarged is it too much to say that, with the possible exception of Martin Luther, no man since St. Paul has done so much for the revival and extension of Christianity and the welfare of mankind."

Lord Macauley says, "Wesley was a man whose eloquence and logical acuteness might have rendered him eminent in literature; whose genius for government was not inferior to that of Richeleau; and who devoted all his powers, in defiance of obloquy and derision, to what he sincerely considered the highest good of his species." Robert Southey says, "I consider John Wesley as the most influential mind of the last century, the man who will have produced the greatest effects centuries, if not milleniums hence, if the present race of men shall continue so long."

Such was John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, and whoso fails to see in him a special product of Divine providence for a given purpose, can but be wanting in spiritual discernment.

III

Again, note the hand of Providence in the fact and manner of the organization of Methodism into a separate Christian body. This exhibited first with regard to the Moravians from whom, in the providence of God, Wesley got the doctrines of Primitive Christianity through the teachings of which he and his brother were converted. "On account of this spiritual relation," as Bishop McTyeire says, "it would have been but natural for Methodism to have affiliated with the Moravian Church. But this was not in the divine order, and it came to pass that a strange doctrine was developed amongst that people, which resulted in a separation. It was fortunate this separation took place when it did, otherwise Methodism might have been entangled

with, if not absorbed in, this older and less aggressive body. The Methodists drew off to themselves. This proved to be an important step in the direction of a distinct denomination, representing well defined and vital doctrine, though such consequences were not defined at the time."

As to separating from the Mother Church, the historian continues: "Mr. Wesley resisted all attempts at a formal separation, still hoping a more friendly spirit would spring up among the clergy. . . . Wesley even tried to force his followers to attendance upon the Established Church, and to receive the sacraments. They went so far as to close their chapels except at certain hours, and refused the sacraments from their own preachers. . . . The leaders are building wiser than they knew, for they really love the Established Church and have no thought of cutting off from it. Under providence they meet the necessities which success creates, are detached from surroundings, are drifting towards a compact and consistent organization. . . . Providentially led the founder of Methodism was careful not to run ahead of providence." "In addition to Wesley's bondage to the fable of apostolic succession, he had a reluctance at innovation, a constitutional dislike to revolution; thus he had the qualities of an instrument for working a solid and enduring foundation. Conservatism in revolution is a rare and valuable factor. It creates and transmits to the organization that follows it the subtle power of stability. . . . The consistency and stability of Methodism is largely due to cautious and slow steps." "After July 30, 1740, all the initial stages of an orthodox, homogeneous, and self-governing body had been provided; and then and there was a Wesleyan Society—not known by that name, but from that germ the Wesleyan Society has grown, and no other change has been found upon it except from small to great." (McTyeire)

From another I quote as follows: "No man ever

stood at the head of a great revolution whose temper was more anti-revolutionary. In earlier days the bishops had been forced to rebuke him (Wesley) for the narrowness and intolerance of his Churchmanship. To the last he clung persistently to the Church of England, and looked on the body he had formed but as a lay society, in full connection with it. He broke with the Moravians, the earliest friends of the Methodists, when they endangered its safe conduct by their contempt for religious forms. Broke with Whitefield when he plunged into extravagant Calvinism. But the same practical temper which led him to reject what was unmeasured, and to be the last to adopt what was new, enabled him at once to grasp and to organize the novelties he adopted." (Hoss)

The following is quoted from Mr. Wesley: "Church or no Church we must attend to the saving of souls. We will not go out; if they drive us out, well—If we can't stop separation without stopping lay preachers, the case is clear—we cannot stop it at all." Of lay preaching he said, "I could scarcely reconcile myself to the strange way of preaching in the fields. Having been so tenacious of every point relating to law and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church."

Wesley's motto was "form societies in every place we preach, else all the seeds fall to the ground and no fruit remains." Whitefield's attachment to America he said, would not permit him to form societies—"I intend therefore," he added, "to go about preaching the gospel to every creature. You are, I suppose," he said to Wesley, "for settling societies everywhere."

The results following these different views of the two great preachers, as expressed by Whitefield himself, is thus given by Dr. Adam Clarke: "Forty years ago I travelled the Bradford and Wells circuit with Mr. John Poole, who told me this incident: Mr. Poole, well known to Mr. Whitefield, was thus addressed by

the latter, 'Well, John, art thou still a Wesleyan?' 'Yes, sir, I thank God that I have the privilege of being in connection with him and his preachers.' 'Well, John, thou art in the right place. My brother Wesley acted wisely; the souls awakened under his ministry he put in class, and thus preserved his labors. This I neglected, and my people are a rope of sand.'

That the Countess of Huntingdon, chief patron of Mr. Whitefield, was an agent in the hand of Providence to help bring about this unintended separation of Methodism and its organization into a separate ecclesiastical body is shown by this quotation from Dr. O. P. Fitzgerald—afterwards bishop—in "Centenary Cameoes": "The Countess of Huntingdon had her place and her work in the Church of God. . . . When in the heat of polemics Wesley and Whitefield were being drawn apart, she drew them together again. The separate movement which she promoted effected its providential purpose."

Of the necessity and value of such an organization we may judge from the following quotation from Isaac Taylor, philosophical and ecclesiastical writer, and member of the Church of England: "The enlightened adherents of ecclesiastical institutions might well persuade themselves to see in Methodism not as they are wont—a horrible vandalism, but the most emphatic recognition that has ever been made of the very core of church principles, namely, that Christianity cannot subsist,—does not develop its genuine powers apart from an ecclesiastical organization."

I close this section with the following from a speaker at the first Methodist Eccumenical Conference, held in City Road Chapel, London, September, 1881, which gives further emphasis to the ecclesiastical quality of organized Methodism: "Methodism is admitted to be, in its ground plan, and in its structure, of all church systems the closest in texture and the most cohesive. Its original structure was that of United Societies. No

other church has such a concatenation for binding its members together. It is in fact as in name a connection—bound and fastened together by class-meetings, leader meetings, quarterly meetings, district meetings, annual conferences—these furnish the common ministries which the itinerancy secures—Affiliated conferences, fraternal conferences—and now the top stone is at last brought on with shoutings—the Eccumenical Conference.”

And all this not only without design at the beginning, but in opposition to the intention, or expectation, of its founder. Certainly the guiding hand of God was in it all!

IV

Observe further, that the hand of Providence is evidenced in the ordering of the doctrines of Methodism.

That God has owned and blessed Protestant bodies which have accepted and propagated the Calvinistic interpretation of the scriptures is gratefully acknowledged. But it seems quite clear that it was not in accordance with His plans for Methodism to preach anything less than unlimited atonement, and an offer of free salvation to every man. “Jesus Christ by the grace of God tasted death for every man,” and “whosoever will let him take the water of life freely”—this was and is the Methodist slogan, and the manifest divine approval of and blessing upon their work, justifies the claim that the ordering of these doctrines was providential.

As one writer says, “Methodism was providentially distinguished as the instrument of reviving in the Church the most important doctrines of spiritual religion. The doctrines of justification by faith, sanctification, and the witness of the Spirit—these were the great import of the ministry of Wesley and his coadjutors. These started not with the project of a new

sect; this with the disciplinary system upon which it was based, was an unexpected result. They were intent only upon shaking out of their slumbers existing sects, and replenishing the popular mind of Great Britain with the effective truths of the original faith. Wesley distinguished true piety from morals by declaring it to be spiritual and miraculous. . . . It is this character of Christianity that mankind are most reluctant to concede, and most inclined to forget. . . . History has demonstrated that the forms of Christianity may exist in general vogue among a community whose actual condition is little above that of the heathen. Such was the condition of England at the rise of Methodism. The vital doctrines of the Reformation were almost entirely omitted from the popular inculcation of religion. To the reformers of Oxford the Christian world owes in great measure, the revival of those cardinal truths which the Church has subsequently distinguished as preeminent by calling them evangelical. It was the vitality of these truths that rendered so efficacious the Wesleyan ministry, and that still quickens all evangelical Christendom.”

“While the Wesleys were strongly Arminian in their faith and practice, Whitefield imbibed the Calvinistic theory. Yet notwithstanding this, having agreed to disagree, they worked together for a time; so for a season there were two kinds of Methodists—the followers of Whitefield who believed in a particular redemption, and those of the Wesleys believing in general redemption. But at the time when Wesley was gradually passing into the broader work of his life, and while having union societies, in which those who offered for membership might be either Arminians or Calvinists, no questions being asked of them on these points—still Wesley’s preachers were held closely to doctrinal as well as experimental standards. Up to 1741, Wesley and Whitefield had worked together; now, since Whitefield’s New England’s associates and

reading had advanced and intensified his Calvinism; and, like himself, Wesley, on the other hand, had become more pronounced in Arminianism; a separation,—a friendly one—followed. To check the progress of what he thought a serious error, Wesley preached a sermon on free grace, and Whitefield called the doctrine of free grace as taught by Wesley “the heresy of universal redemption’.” “They parted for a season. The living stream dividing, one branch, after refreshing a dry and thirsty land, is absorbed and lost; the other, with well defined and widening bands and deepening currents flows on.” (Bishop McTyeire’s Hist. Methodism.) As Dr. O. P. Fitzgerald puts it, “There was no permanent breach of fellowship between Wesley the Arminian and Whitefield the Calvinist. That God was with them both there can be no doubt, that He overruled the difference for the furtherance of the gospel is equally clear.”

As further evidence of the will of God in this separation in the interests of the Arminian doctrine, I quote as follows: “While an abortive attempt was being made under the patronage of an English Countess to establish Calvinism in Georgia, the foundation of its Arminian type was well laid in Maryland by a poor Irish farmer—Strawbridge; the chapel in New York under the carpenter Embury was prospering; and Robert Williams and John King were forming classes and planting circuits in Virginia and North Carolina.”

After Wesley’s conversion May 24, 1738, “the doctrine of salvation by faith was like fire in his bones; and once he declared ‘My soul was so enlarged that I could have cried out ‘Give me where to stand and I could move the world’.” Thus becoming, as it were, a spiritual Archimedes, inspired and thrilled with the gospel which had saved his own soul, and which he now so confidently preached to others. As to the force of doctrine as seen in Christian experience, the following quotation from Dr. John J. Tigert in the Methodist

Quarterly Review is given: "If we accept the day of Pentecost as the birthday of the Christian Church, and the Acts of the Apostles as the beginning of the record of the Church's history, it would probably be very generally agreed that since that epoch, and within that history, the four most notable conversions are those of St. Paul, St. Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Wesley. These have been pivotal for Christian experience, doctrine, life; and for church organization and extension. The four conversions exhibit the same characteristic phases, strikingly, and legibly marked, and admirably illustrate how fundamental Christian doctrine finds its deepest foundation and confirmation in Christian experience."

However, the doctrines adopted by the Methodists, as the historian declares, "were not claimed to be Wesleyan dogmas in the sense of being declared by the Wesleyans. In their controversies respecting their religious tenets they invariably claimed theirs to be the old religion—that of the Primitive Church. With regard to the fall of man, original sin, etc., these they held in common with all orthodox churches. Their peculiar emphasis was experimental religion, not as new, but neglected and lost sight of." It was the preaching of these doctrines that gave birth to the revival of religion called the religious movement of the eighteenth century, known as the Wesleyan movement, or Methodism. And this gave Methodism a place amongst the foremost of the Church militant. In truth, notwithstanding Methodism's shorter life as a Church, as compared with the lives of the other larger Christian bodies, barring the Lutheran denomination, she excels in numbers that of any other Protestant body of Christians—this due to the emphasis given to the doctrines of free grace, and the necessity of spiritual regeneration, plus the polity of the church. Realizing the vital relation of doctrine to salvation, Methodism has relied under God, solely upon the preaching of these doc-

trines in her world-wide parish, for the extension of the kingdom of righteousness. She has scrupulously avoided the invasion of other Christian folds to build up her own, because from the Methodist viewpoint proselytism carries in itself *prima facie* evidence of the lack of spiritual regeneration, and a corresponding bondage to ritualistic observance—conditions which Methodism conceives to be inconsistent with the doctrines of Primitive Christianity.

The same providence that directed the ordering of the doctrines of Methodism also provided instrumentalities through which these doctrines have been embodied in standards that guarantee their preservation through the ages. Note first these doctrines as set forth in the Wesleyan hymns. Of these one has said in substance that one who is not intimately and familiarly acquainted with the Wesleyan hymns, is unacquainted with the real spirit of Methodism. Charles Wesley has been called the poet of Methodism, and of his hymns Dr. O. P. Fitzgerald says, "From these hymns a body of divinity might be constructed as solid as granite, and aglow with the light of sanctified genius. The doctrines of Methodism have been sung into the hearts of thousands of men and women whose prejudices no force of logic or persuasion could have moved. His hymns are working as leaven in every evangelical church on earth." But Methodist doctrine is systematically embodied in the following works: First the commentaries of Benson and Clarke—books which have contributed greatly to the success of Methodism—their respective authors being providential men, raised up for such a time as that in which they served. Richard Watson, providentially brought under Methodist influences, was soundly converted, "was profoundly impressed with the providential mission of Methodism, and his soul was thrilled with the contemplation of its possibilities as a system of Christian evangelization. He was Methodism's greatest theologian,

and his Theological Institutes is a scientific statement of Methodist theology by a man providentially endowed and equipped for the task—a writer who crystalized Methodist doctrine into imperishable forms.” (Fitzgerald). John Fletcher, providentially turned away from the military course which he had chosen—the divine hand directing so that his combative propensities were turned to the cause of defending the faith once delivered to the saints—“his providential function in the development of Methodism was two-fold—he was the exponent and the defender of Methodist doctrine—to him belongs the immortal honor of being the instrument, under God, of keeping the theology of Methodism in the middle current between the extreme of Augustinianism on the one side, and the loose and ruinous Antinomianism on the other.” (Fitzgerald.) Besides all these John Wesley himself has left two volumes of sermons, and his Notes on the New Testament, wherein are embodied his doctrinal teachings.

Thus, “the original doctrinal standards have been so well preserved that all the minor bodies (of Methodism) have taken them away with them and are jealous of their right to them, as a precious heritage.” There has never been a doctrinal scism in Methodism.

As with its doctrines, so also was the Polity of Methodism divinely ordered.

V

“With his mind on the lost multitudes Wesley was concerned about their salvation, but had not premeditated plan of reaching them. Having himself broken through the hard and tasteless hull of religion, and gotten to the kernal, Wesley found it so sweet that he wanted to share it with all the world. As immediate results were his uniform purpose he could not delay his designs by waiting for a ministry qualified by the old course of preparatory education, but revived the apostolic example of a lay ministry. He

could not allow these the limited labors of a single charge, but hastening from place to place he revived the means by which the apostle conquered the world—an itinerant ministry. Not content with its regular labors it appropriated all its subordinate energies in the new offices of local preachers, exhorters and leaders. While it retained the formal means of grace, it either introduced or adopted the class meeting, the band meeting, the prayer meeting, the camp meeting, the love feast, and the watch night. So it became a vast and powerful machinery—the various conferences, and ministers, forming a series of instrumentalities unequalled by any other Protestant denomination.”

“The earlier Methodist preachers represented the ‘College on horseback.’ Armed with the Bible, hymn book and discipline, and with mind stored with Fletcher’s Checks, Watson’s Institutes, Clarke’s Commentaries, and Wesley’s Notes and Sermons—they defended the Methodist Creed, and were guardians of the order and integrity of the Methodist discipline, were vigilant sentinels over the purity of the Church which is the badge of Primitive Methodism—‘sound in doctrine and holy in life’.”

“These preachers were men of the people, in fullest sympathy with the masses. Their sermons were not burdened with unintelligible theological terms—every word was in the mother tongue, and fully comprehended by even the less intelligent classes. They were very ardent, their words took fire in their own hearts, and went out blazing among the people. They were very bold and fearless in rebuking sin—Sinai was altogether aflame before their congregations. They knew where the conscience lay, and with what probe to touch the quick of it. Then when a soul fell thunder smitten amid the crags of Sinai, they lifted and laid him at the feet of the Cross, under the stream that dripped warm and healing from the very heart of the Victim who tasted death for every man. Themselves

knew His power to save—a free, full, present salvation conditioned on faith—this was their theme. They were men of deep experience in the things of God—men of prayer, and great faith. They ever heard the voice of the Master's words: 'Lo I am with you'—He was with them, and they felt and knew it. They had wrestled with the Angel and had power with God and men." (From Life and Labors of Bishop Marvin, by Dr. Finney.)

The self-denial of the ministry was a law of life to Methodism, in which it was born, and in which it must be sustained. The sentiment of the average itinerant of the old days was expressed by one, who rather than quit his post, went with his wife and children into an old hovel. He said he did not understand that God had called him to preach on condition that the Church did its duty. Bishop Marvin as a beginner served Grundy Mission three consecutive years and received an average salary of a fraction more than \$26 a year. Bishop Asbury served his episcopal district, undergoing untold hardships, at a salary of \$84.00 a year. "The average itinerant preacher if he is faithful to his vows, can never accumulate property. He must break up and go whenever and wherever sent. They must follow a Master who had not "where to lay His head."

"The spirit and plan of the itinerancy marks Methodism the church of the people. It captivates the popular heart. Of this church and its ministry Horace Greeley, called the philosopher of American journalism, is quoted as saying, "The growth and strength of Methodism in America are of interest outside of all sectional considerations, as one of the ways that mark the progress of the current of universal civilization, and human progress. . . . There is something in the creed and history of this church, but still more in their manner of teaching which appeals directly to the feelings of the middle and lower classes. The primary fact

that they took their rise in a vigorous and righteous protest against the effeteness and inertia of an aristocratic establishment, appeals to the drop of democratic blood in every man who thinks social fate is against him; the enforced poverty of their ministers, the system of the itinerancy, their favorite mode of passionate address in which the priest (preacher) forces the sinner, as it were, into actual personal contact with his Maker—all make this sect the exponent and receptacle of the great mass of the people, and for this cause render it worthy the attention and scrutiny of the unbiased thinker'." (The preceding quotations are from the Life and Labors of Bishop Marvin, by Thos. M. Finney.)

I quote further under this head from The Editor's Table in the Methodist Quarterly Review, January, 1891, as follows: "At the time of the organization of the Church, 1784-5, there was neither one man nor a set of men who had studied the question and undertaken the task of devising a system of government for the Methodists of America. As it was in the rise and growth of Methodism in England, so was it in America. When an emergency arose the best provision was made for it, according to the providential developments at the time. Few experiments were made. In all cases instructive facts led the way to the formation of useful theories, and thus by degrees a strong, wise and successful system of government was established. The annual conference for the first period—1785-1791—was also the general conference for the Church, and it was the only body that ventured to make rules and regulations until the first general conference, 1792. The general conference has shown no remissness in the strict accountability of the traveling preacher for his official administration. If he is fatally defective, either in knowledge or judgment, he must give way to some one who is better qualified, or better disposed. In the strictest possible terms the itinerant preacher is

taught that there are two essential factors in the pastoral relation: the Church and the preacher. The Church has no authoritative voice in the choosing of the pastor, but a pastor must be chosen. Some one must fill the place, for it is the boast of Methodism—and no other church in Protestant Christianity can make it—that there is not in all our territory a church without a pastor—not for a week, not a day does the vacancy, once made, remain unprovided for. The Bishop, through his deputy, the presiding elder, instantly fills the vacancy the best he can—and filled it must be, and promptly filled. The reason for such speedy result is that no post of duty must be left vacant for a day.”

“The living soul of Methodist law is the resolve to keep every member of the Church fully alive to the grave responsibility, and the glorious privilege of membership in the Church of God. The pastor reaches the people; the Bishop stands between the pastor and the highest authority in the Church. The Church in her legislative capacity stands before us all in the Quadrennial Conference. To this body the Chief Shepherds give account of their official administration. At the Annual Conference the pastors report to the Bishops, and thus from the most obscure corner of Methodism to the great representative body that surveys the whole field of labor, there are connecting links full of life, full of vigor, and we believe, full of the Holy Ghost, and these cause us to be one flock, having many shepherds, but all responsive to the call of the Bishop and Shepherd of Souls”.—Our conclusion is that “the Methodist system of Church government comprises one of the simplest codes of ecclesiastical law, while its administration is less liable to abuse than any other that the wit of man has devised”—And all because of the of the guiding hand of God in its planning.

Now, having given from authoritative sources historic facts indicating the unmistakable hand of provi-

dence in timing the coming of Methodism; in the preparation of its founder, in the fact and manner of its organization and in the ordering of its doctrines and polity—all of which clearly demonstrate Methodism to be a child of providence—in justification of its origin I cite a few things with regard to its influence:

VI

Probably the explanation of the meaning and force of Methodism could hardly be more concisely stated than in the words of Bishop McTyeire's expression of his own appreciation of Bishop Soule as a man and Christian bishop; and the reason of the latter's love of Methodism: "No one was ever more thoroughly attached to Methodist doctrine and discipline than Bishop Soule, than whom no grander man, no more exemplary Christian, or no more useful bishop has ever appeared in Methodism. Soule loved Methodism because of its spiritual character, its aggressive power and diffusive spirit; its elevated standard of experimental and practical piety." In this statement is embodied the very soul of Methodism, and herein is found the basis of its influence in the world. Notwithstanding it was at first hailed with ridicule and derision, and persecuted on every side, yet its effect on the English nation was such that it elicited the following statement from a high authority: "The splendid victories by land and sea must yield in importance to that religious revolution which shortly before had begun by the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield: Its lasting impression on the Church of England; upon the amount and distribution of moral forces upon the nature, and even upon the course of political history. But the Methodists themselves were the least result of Methodism. Not only did it affect the established Church, but a new philanthropy reformed prisons, infused clemency and wisdom in penal laws, abolished the slave trade, and

gave the first impulse to popular education" (From Green's History of the English People).

As to its effects in New England it is said, "Though so unwelcome Methodism was nowhere more needed than in New England. Its influence modified the evils of Unitarianism and rationalism, which showed reaction against high Calvinism. Effete and dead forms of religion received the infusion of a new life. In point of fact Methodist preachers, notwithstanding the great body of them in America have been what is popularly called 'uneducated men,' have influenced American society in religious matters, more effectively than any other class of preachers. The census of Methodism is an astonishment to the world. But the literal census gives only a partial statement of the results of these men's works. The fruit of Methodist revivals abound in other churches. Other churches have fallen largely into the methods of labor, and character of preaching which have been so potential amongst Methodists. Besides all this these (so called) uneducated men have revolutionized the theology of this continent." Bishop McTyeire quotes a "distinguished Universalist" as saying that "itinerant preachers saved the valley of the Mississippi from heathenism."

The following from Wm. F. Warren in the Methodist Quarterly Review, January, 1891—who gives due credit to other influences with Methodism—shows the powerful effect that Methodism had on the old Puritanical faith of New England: "The Puritan view was that antecedent to any sin, and solely because of Adam's fall, each child was deserving of God's wrath and eternal damnation. There was no power of choice between good and evil, and so no possible effort of the individual or teacher, could in the least degree, change the intellectual or spiritual destiny of the individual to which he had from all eternity been irrevocably fore-ordained. According to this Puritan view, 'God did

from all eternity, by the most wise and holy council of His own will, freely and unchangably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.' For generations this exact statement, with the theological system based upon it, was taught to every child, and professed by every teacher in Puritan New England Under the work and influence of Jesse Lee and his coadjutors (Methodist preachers) this strict Calvinism fell. The established (Congregational) church was disestablished. . . . Freedom came in—political, religious, social freedom. This new spirit of freedom was so contagious and irresistible that even the historic stronghold of the old teaching, Harvard College, rashly, and in part, ignorantly, reaching from the bondage of the past, threw itself into the arms of an alien and unevangelical faith. As if to disprove their former fatalism, and vindicate freedom, the richest and strongest Puritan churches of Eastern New England, followed the example of the College and forever renounced the teaching of New England theology. The ideals brought in by Jesse Lee and his associates were at first an astonishment, but soon an inspiration. They set forth the sweet and luminous doctrine of Christian perfection. They claimed that Christ died for all, that the mission of the Comforter was for all.—Affirming that all men are graciously able at this moment to place themselves in the right relations to God, and by the aid of the Spirit to enter upon a holy personal development of a holy character and life through faith in the blood of Christ. With these ideals came in all others pertaining to a pure and lofty humanism. The old Westminster Catechism disappeared from schoolhouse and home, and a Methodist academy was formed in every New England Commonwealth except one.”

These instances show some vital, visible effects of Methodism, to say nothing of innumerable others seen and felt, if not acknowledged, by all men. Imagine if possible, some indescribable power that might eliminate

from earth and heaven every vestige of influence accomplished through Methodism in human life and destiny, and Infinite Wisdom alone could determine to what extent the wheels of spiritual progress would recede, or to what extent the inhabitants of heaven would be decimated, or the borders of hell enlarged.

This Methodist influence is due to its spiritual endowment—an endowment which gave to the Methodist Movement an impetus unequalled by any other religious movement since apostolic times. This explains its rapidity of conquest, its irresistible and world-wide influence. The finest gold mine ever discovered would have been of no practicable value had it not been worked. The virus of the serpent with all its deadliness, is dependent for action on the serpent's fangs. So abstract principles, though vital in themselves, are impotent until they find expression in concrete form. This is why Satan attacked in person the first human pair; it is why God took Moses from tending sheep to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage; it is why Jonah, in spite of protest, was sent from Gath Hopher to Ninevah. It explains why the Son of God himself was manifested in human form, and why He equipped disciples, representatives of an endless line of successors, to preach the gospel to every creature. Methodism, like the primitive church, and the rest of the universe, was predicated on action; and Wesley and Asbury were modern duplicates of Barnabas and Saul of Tarsus, plus the horse and saddle. The heart of Methodism is spirituality, its method of distribution, the itinerancy; and a prophecy of Methodism may be found in Abraham who, at God's command, went out, he knew not whither; and in David, of whom it is said, "he went on and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him"—the one illustrating the surrendered spirit to the service of a cause, the other representing the religion of moving along—both of which principles being characteristics of Methodist preachers. These principles in

action, under the endowment of the Spirit of holiness, have made an epoch in church history; and doubtless have helped to hasten the coming of the Kingdom of God. Because of these things, the prayer and the expectation is that, when Jesus shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel and the trump of God, there shall even then be found moving Methodist preachers to greet Him at His coming!

Human history furnishes no complete parallel to the Methodist itinerancy; and as we, as human beings, are connected by interest and by action with matters which, according to the Scriptures, excite angelic curiosity, our conception is that it were a finer thing to be a faithful minister of Jesus Christ than to be an angel—personally, I would rather be a God-appointed and a God-approved itinerant Methodist preacher than to be two angels!

VII

Now in conclusion, I venture to declare the purpose of the peculiar form of this paper: The service which I now render, in the nature of the case, comes only to an occasional man and to that man, as a rule, but once in a lifetime. Realizing this, on being apprised that this, then, hitherto undreamed of honor and privilege, had been conferred upon myself, from the beginning I purposed to endeavor so to use the occasion as if possible to make it of some real service to the cause of Methodism. A bold assumption, perhaps, on the part of a plain man; and this thought probably would have deterred him had he not reflected that even the wench whom no one ever thinks to mention, was as truly a link in the chain of God's purposes with regard to the deliverance of David as were Jonathan and Ahimaaz themselves. Also he thought that as each single drop bears its little part in lifting the great swelling tides of the ocean; and as even the faintest star adds its mite to the glory of the heavens—even so might one common

human life, looking to the inspiration of the Almighty, make some slight contribution to the great sum total of sanctified influences used of God in the evangelization of the world.

With this in view my effort has been not to attempt to entertain, nor indeed primarily to instruct, for probably the greater part of that which I have written is more or less commonplace to the majority of my brethren. Rather, my purpose has been to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful" of this important consideration: i. e., the efficiency and value of Methodism as preached and practiced by the fathers; and thereby incited to a continuance in the same line of things—things which have been tested by the fires of persecution, of self-denials, of hardships and sufferings.

At the session of the old South Carolina Conference at Greenville, December 1882, Bishop McTyeire, having been a delegate to the first Ecumenical Conference, which had been held some fifteen months before, imbued with the desire that Methodist principles should not decline, preached from Phil. 3:16, "Nevertheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." The point in the sermon was that there should be no departure from Methodist doctrines or usages. Some years later at a session of the General Conference, when some would-be progressives were clamoring for a restatement of our doctrines, Bishop A. W. Wilson, then senior bishop of our church, with a powerful warning appeal estopped the proposed action. Since then, so far as I recall, no specific effort has been made to modify the doctrines of Methodism. However, the higher critics have been at work, and in these later years especially, have shown their fine Italian hand. Observant men warn us that their work largely is more subtle than blatant. For this reason it is all the more important for us to "walk by the same rule—to mind the same thing." The dy-

ing message of Peter Doub, one of the early Methodist preachers, to his brethren then in Conference assembled, is well worth our prayerful consideration: "Tell the brethren to preach the same doctrines."

It were foolish to reject or censure new methods in church work and service, for in the continuous movement of human progress new conditions arise, and to meet such conditions there must be not only new methods adopted, but also new applications of methods. This is precisely what Mr. Wesley and his helpers did at the rise of Methodism; and their successors kept up the use of this wise rule.

Interpret it as we may, the one only alternative to heavenly blessedness is hell fire; and the one only protection against this unspeakable destiny is the gospel of Jesus Christ. But revelation justifies the assertion that the truth of God may be changed into a lie (Rom. 1:25) and a deceived heart may so turn aside a man that he "cannot deliver his soul or say, is there not a lie on my right hand." (Isa. 44:20.)

Wherefore let us not forget that the tragedy of the world lies not only in the fact of its being a fallen world, but also in the equally lamentable fact that revealed truth—even God's saving truth—may be so perverted, or distorted, or diluted, as to become in the hands of blind leaders a veritable means of destroying human souls. Church history shows a persistent tendency even in Church life towards a reversion to type; that to meet this tendency ecclesiastics have too often attempted to substitute ritualism for spiritual worship; and always it appears that the ratio of increase in ritualistic formula has been in the exact proportion to the declension of the spiritual life of the church. This being a rule that works both ways, it has proven to be the strongest card that Satan uses in the destruction of the souls of men. This applies not only to pagan and heathen systems of religion, but to Christianity itself—it being well known that for centuries

there has existed a form of Christianity which finds expression in little else than form and ceremony, which "teaches for doctrines the commandments of men", and whose full flower is a meaningless, yet fatal, superstition.

It is the truth of God that makes men free,—the truth which centers in the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of penitent and believing men "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Confining itself absolutely to this view of Christian truth Methodism, from the beginning has been and is, one of the mightiest spiritual forces known to our planet; and it cannot decline so long as its Methodistic principles are preserved. And today the first duty of the people called Methodists is to see to it that there shall not be the slightest modification of these vital doctrines.

The Church of God is not a dress parade. It is engaged in the most solemn and far-reaching mission known to the human understanding—even the evangelization and regeneration of a ruined world. For this stupendous undertaking God has but one plan—the simple preaching of the gospel, and if this gospel is allowed to be tampered with, and should become an emasculated gospel, then God's gracious purposes could not but fail. But this gospel preached in its purity as it must and shall be preached, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth—yea, it has in itself a saving capacity of love and wisdom and power sufficient to redeem a thousand worlds! Wherefore let Methodism, in conjunction with God's other evangelistic forces, continue to preach this Saving Evangel "till earth's remotest bounds shall learn Messiah's name."