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from human thought. Jesus turns our thoughts and purposes outward from our narrow self-centred life and we become conscious of our neighbours. We begin to think in terms, not of our own rights and privileges, but of our responsibilities and opportunities of service. The circle of our benevolence extends from those who are immediately related to us by ties of blood or friendship and includes our whole community. Then the boundaries are pushed still farther back and we are interested in

other communities, in distant parts of our own land; and yet again, and our neighbourhood takes in China and India and Africa. World service becomes a challenging opportunity. Every revelation of human need to which we have the power of responding becomes for us an obligation of wider service. So Jesus is constantly pushing back the horizon. For the life with Christ is an ever-expanding life.¹

¹ C. E. Schofield, *The Gospel of Opportunity*, 59.

Present-Day Faiths.

Methodism.

BY THE REV. A. W. HARRISON, M.C., B.SC., D.D., WESTMINSTER TRAINING COLLEGE, LONDON.

No great division of the modern Church bears in its spirit and structure so much the imprint of one personality as Methodism does. John Wesley still lives in its ministry, its worship, and in all its Church courts. Yet, like many other great reformers, he would have desired least of all to be regarded as an innovator. The master passion of his life was the endeavour to recover primitive Christianity. The conservative instinct which perpetually endeavours to rediscover what is best in the past, while it is prepared to lop the mouldering bough away, is calculated to leave more abiding results than the more radical temper which has for its initial motto that of Ezekiel, 'I will overturn, overturn, overturn it.' Wesley's effectiveness in Church history is due to the fact that in his personality was that rarest of combinations—the great evangelist and the ecclesiastical statesman. It was indeed fortunate that his profound interest in ecclesiastical history came before his call to the work of an evangelist. Wesley had reached the mature age of thirty-five before he discovered in a 'heart strangely warmed' the real mission of his life. He was not, therefore, in danger of losing the sense of proportion when driven by this new-found 'enthusiasm' to preach his gospel in almost every parish in England. He took no step forward without finding precedents for his action in early Church history, or that justification which urgent necessity alone could provide for a mind that was eminently balanced and sane.

Although in 1738 his days of laborious study were at an end and those of practical administration were

about to begin, yet for the remaining fifty-three years of his life his mind continued to be remarkably receptive of new ideas. He continued to read persistently and widely and was prepared to learn something from any and every man whom he met. If so simple a soul as the Moravian, Peter Böhler, was able to help him so much at a critical moment in his life, then God might speak some new message to him by any one of His children. We are therefore impressed not so much by the originality of Wesley's mind as by its wide hospitality and by the amazing way in which he put his discoveries into practice. He was a strong Churchman with a very eclectic mind, prepared to surrender his dearest prejudices at the bidding of Truth.

The prejudices of Wesley were those of a High Churchman, in the eighteenth-century use of that term. In his own mind he considered himself loyal to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England to the day of his death. He strongly deprecated the idea that the Methodist societies should break with the Established Church. They began as religious societies in connexion with the Church similar to those already in existence, some of which dated back to the days of Charles II. The spirit of the revival, however, made them missionary and aggressive, alive with contagious zeal. They claimed not only nominal members of the Established Church, but strayed dissenters and thousands who had not even a nominal Church membership beyond that of baptism in infancy. Had the Church of England known the day of its visitation it might have found a place in its organization for a

new order of friars, and Wesley's lay preachers would have been welcomed as the helpers of the parish clergy. Many of them might have been ordained, for there was a great shortage of incumbents, especially in new industrial centres. But the eighteenth-century Church was not only destitute of vision, it had neither leadership nor policy. Its Convocation never met and its bishops were largely non-resident. In the earlier days of the movement, the persecution of the Methodists was led by the clergy, and Wesley was driven unwillingly and step by step along lines that made separation almost inevitable after his death. His attitude to the Church is strangely similar to that of Thomas Cartwright and the early English Presbyterians; with this difference, that in the reign of Elizabeth it was possible to make uniformity compulsory, while in the days of the Georges, although much of the Clarendon Code was still on the Statute Book, it had become impossible to suppress a movement like the Evangelical Revival by State action. Neither Cartwright nor Wesley had any intention of leaving the Church; they merely wished to restore it to its apostolic condition. Cartwright had little of Wesley's missionary fervour, but he had a similar aim and came to similar conclusions on some important points of Church government. The main object of both men was to bring the English Church back to the state of the Church of the first three centuries, as they understood it.

Wesley's influence as evangelist and ecclesiastic is alive in Methodism to-day. As the spirit is more than the body, and life comes before organization, let us look at the subject of evangelism first. The distinctive quality of Methodism to the people of the eighteenth century seemed the violence of its religious enthusiasm, an enthusiasm closely akin to madness. Memories of the excesses of Anabaptists and Puritan sectaries at the time of the Commonwealth made 'enthusiasm' a very alarming proposition. Wesley himself dreaded extravagance and prayed for 'a calmly fervent zeal' for himself and his followers. In the main his prayer was answered. The Methodists brought a new warmth into the religious life of the land, and some of it they have preserved to this day. The saying of Augustine that 'one warm heart sets another on fire' was never better exemplified than in the case of John Wesley. May 24th, 1738, can hardly be regarded as the date of his conversion, but it was the beginning of his world-mission; a new discovery of the greatness of redeeming love sent him out of the little room in Aldersgate Street

with a strangely warmed heart prepared to set on fire the hearts of thousands. Methodist hymns are full of the symbolism of fire, as the element that burns up evil and spreads with startling rapidity over the landscape. Fervour was the first contribution that Methodism made to the lifeless Christianity of their day. It expressed itself not merely in their ceaseless activity in evangelism:

My every sacred moment spend
In publishing the sinner's friend,

but in the new passion that glowed in their worship. They sang hymns to an extent that no Christian congregations had ever done before; and such hymns! The output of Charles Wesley as a hymn writer is without parallel, and although the Methodists no longer call their hymn-book *Wesley's Hymns*, yet there are four hundred and seventy-five even in the present collection that claim that name. The Methodists sang the joy of their religious experience, and the hymn-book became also their great devotional manual. Its familiar lines rose to their lips not only as they went about their daily work, setting out like Seth Bede, repeating:

Dark and cheerless is the morn
Unaccompanied by Thee,
Joyless is the day's return
Till Thy mercy's beams I see,
Till Thou inward light impart,
Glad my eyes, and warm my heart,

but when they came to die it was the hymn-book they still quoted on the death-bed. 'Our people die well,' said Wesley; and he left them 'an example, singing almost in his last words his brother's hymn, 'I'll praise my Maker while I've breath.' Like Francis of Assisi, he went to meet God singing. Even when the Methodists took over the hymns of their contemporaries they put a new quality in them. Doddridge wrote:

Ye humble souls that seek the Lord,
Chase all your fears away;
And bow with pleasure down to see
The place where Jesus lay.

John Wesley altered 'pleasure' into 'rapture,' and in that single change expressed the difference the Revival had made to Christian emotion.

The secret of this new fervour is not far to seek. It arose not from a new fear of hell, as some critics of the movement suggest, but from a new discovery of the love of God in Christ. Watts-Dunton has coined an apt phrase to account for the great literary awakening at the beginning of the nineteenth century; it was due, he says, to the Re-

naissance of wonder. That new birth of wonder had spread far and wide in the hearts of the common people of England long before it flowered in beauty in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats. But the wonder in the heart of the people had its source in religion ; a new vision of the world in the light of the Cross :

Hence our hearts melt, our eyes o'erflow,
Our words are lost ; nor will we know,
Nor will we think of aught beside,
My Lord, my Love is crucified !

In assessing Methodism's contribution to catholic Christianity, enough has not been made of the hymns of the revival, not merely for their own inherent worth, but as the best expression of the real secret of the movement.

Methodists are still warm-hearted, and they still love to assemble in great gatherings and sing emotional hymns. They are often the victims of the illusions of the mass meeting. Declining success in evangelistic effort in the ordinary chapel services has led them to cover the country with great mission halls in all the big centres of population. These costly enterprises, and indeed all the complicated activities of a highly centralized system, are supported with astonishing generosity, but it can hardly be claimed that there is the same missionary ardour as in the early days. Perhaps the best modern expression of that characteristic fervour is to be found neither in the Central Halls nor in the open-handed generosity of the Methodist people, but in what remains of a genuine family spirit running throughout the whole community. Methodism is a 'Connexional' system, and the links that bind congregation with congregation and circuit with circuit are stronger than the ties which unite any other large religious body. An itinerant ministry that was not permitted by Wesley's Deed Poll to remain more than three years at any one place, has done much to unify the whole system. Ministers travel all over the country making friends everywhere, keeping alive the same traditions, meeting in the family reunion at the Annual Conference, or in the District Synods, and finding there not only their fellow-ministers but laymen whom they have known in former circuits. In spite of their size the Methodist Churches still continue to be large families, though whether the same spirit will remain when they all come together in a still larger group may well be doubted. The same family spirit expresses itself in the Circuit system, where the stronger churches give their support to the weak and all combine together for new enterprises and expressions. Suburban life is not so friendly

to this tendency as the country town, the mother of many daughter churches, yet it is the Circuit system that has carried Methodism through many of the acute problems that have followed the War. In the individual church Methodism can claim no monopoly of the family spirit, yet every society was in Wesley's mind a very closely-knit corporation, and the classes and bands brought the members into much more direct relation with each other than was the case in any other communion. The ideal once again finds its expression in the hymn-book : hymn after hymn might be chosen from the section 'For the Society Meeting, Giving Thanks, Praying, Parting' to express this, but we will quote from one of the quaintest of them :

How good and pleasant 'tis to see,
When brethren cordially agree,
And kindly think and speak the same !
A family of faith and love,
Combined to seek the things above,
And spread the common Saviour's fame.

Many aspects of this family sentiment have changed, but the ideal still has its appeal, and no members of the modern Church in England are such persistent 'Swanwickers' as the Methodists. Their old love for religious fellowship remains and is a very valuable element to contribute to any new form of reorganized Church life. Dean Inge, in a somewhat caustic and sceptical discussion of the Lambeth Appeal, saw no hope of any response to it save perhaps from those whom he described as 'our warm-hearted Wesleyan friends.' It is true that he seemed to suggest that this was due to the fact that a warmth of heart among the Wesleyans carried along with it certain compensating defects in intelligence, but we still prefer generous emotion to intellect and still preserve something of that catholic spirit which Wesley inculcated in his famous sermon on the text, 'Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? If it be, give me thine hand.'

If the most important innovation introduced by the Methodist movement was a change of temperature, this came directly from Wesley the evangelist. But Wesley was also an ecclesiastical statesman, and he had not studied the early history of the Church in vain. He could find parallels in previous days for his love-feasts, his watch-nights, for the employment of lay preachers, and even for something that corresponded to the Class Meeting. He described the classes as resembling the periodical gatherings of the catechumens of the early Church ; the quarterly class tickets he compared to the *tesseræ* and to the *commendatitia* or commendatory letters given to members of the early Church. He

found the Love-feast or *Agape* minutely described by Tertullian, and in Bingham's *Antiquities* were many details about the early Vigil or Watch-night. The love-feast has now ceased to be a regular observance in all the churches of Methodism, and is only held occasionally at special times and a few places where its popularity survives, but the Watch-night service in the closing hour of the old year has become common outside Methodism. Watch-night services were originally held monthly, but were afterwards restricted to New Year's Eve to avoid any possibility of scandal. Of these special and distinctive means of grace the most important is the Class Meeting. To this day every church member must have his name on a class book and be under the spiritual direction of a leader. The class leaders were under-shepherds of the flock of Christ, and many of them still do splendid pastoral work. Originally the societies were divided into classes of about a dozen members which met regularly on some week-day under the leadership of some one specially qualified to be a director of souls. Instead of resorting one by one to the Confessional, the Methodists confessed their sins to one another. They gave their experience of temptation, of deliverance, of doubt and fear, as well as of faith, hope, and love. As they talked one to another, listened to the counsel of their revered leader, and sang their beloved hymns together, they found strength for the conflicts of another week in an unsympathetic world. The Class Meeting has changed its form in many places, but there are still thousands of classes meeting week by week, and wherever vital religion of a fervent character is to be found some such form of intimate fellowship seems to be a necessity. The Class Meeting was the germ-cell of Methodism, and has been in the past so invaluable that it must be regarded as one of the greatest contributions that Methodism has made to our common Christianity.

While the Class Meeting has meant so much to the members, it has perhaps meant even more to the leaders, for such responsible work creates in earnest men and women a spiritual and sympathetic character. This brings us to another fact about Methodism which explains much of its remarkable development in the Colonies as well as at home. No religious community has given such wide opportunities for lay workers in the Church not merely at the business routine of serving tables and sitting on committees, but in the spiritual activities of the Class Leader and the Local Preacher. There are circuits in Wesleyan Methodism to-day with thirty-six chapels and only three ministers, so that Sunday

by Sunday thirty-three of the pulpits in such a circuit are filled by lay preachers. There are to-day in the various Methodist Churches in Great Britain over forty thousand local preachers who labour for the bread that perisheth for six days of the week, and are prepared if necessary to go out to some remote village to offer the bread of life to others on the seventh. The best apology for their labours is that heard by Ian Maclaren in a Cheshire Methodist chapel from a farmer who was a rather poor preacher; at the end of his sermon he acknowledged his limitations, but added, 'You may ask me why I, who am a poor preacher, venture to proclaim the gospel to others. It is because I cannot eat my bit of bread alone.' But the local preachers have numbered in their ranks some of the greatest preachers Methodism has produced. Their self-sacrificing work has made them read and think, and they have become leaders in the social as well as the religious life of their districts. The influence of the local preacher is written deep in the political life of England as well as in the churches where he has learnt the art of speaking. Forty years ago Canon Jessopp said of the Primitive Methodists of East Anglia that in hundreds of parishes 'the stuffy little chapel by the wayside was the only place where the peasantry had enjoyed the free expression of their opinions, and where under an organization elaborated with extraordinary sagacity they had kept up a school of music, literature, and politics, self-supporting and unaided by dole or subsidy—above all, a school of eloquence, in which the lowliest had become familiarized with the ordinary rules of debate, and had been trained to express himself with directness, vigour, and fluency.' It can scarcely be questioned that Methodism has given its members (whether men or women) remarkable privileges and responsibilities in religious service.

In the quotation from Canon Jessopp is a reference to the Methodist organization that had been 'elaborated with extraordinary sagacity.' The tribute is not undeserved. Wesley's was the mind that constructed the organism which remains in 1927 in essence what it was in 1791. The complete severance from the Church of England that followed Wesley's death demanded wisdom and statesmanship of a very high order if the gains of the eighteenth century were to be preserved. God provided the men for the task, and however much we may regret the manifold divisions of Christendom, we believe that it was in the order of Divine Providence that so elastic and effective an organization should have been evolved in the great colonizing days of British expansion.

Wesley was a strict Episcopalian, but in 1746, after reading King's *Account of the Primitive Church*, he came to the conclusion that bishops and presbyters were of the same order and that he was qualified to ordain his preachers to the ministry. It was only at the close of his life and for exceptional cases that he was driven to take this extreme step, but it is interesting to observe that he gradually organized his societies into a system that was in essence Presbyterian. The Leaders' Meeting corresponds to the Kirk Session, the Circuit to the Presbytery, the name Synod is now used by both Methodists and Presbyterians for the next higher court, since the former have changed their old term the District Meeting to Synod, and finally the Conference corresponds to the General Assembly. Methodism, therefore, in the British Isles is now more akin to Presbyterianism than to the Church of England, especially as the old doctrinal difference can hardly be said to exist.

The last generation has witnessed the decay of much that was characteristic of the old Methodism.

Charles Wesley's hymns are neither sung nor known as they once were; the percentage of Methodists who give their experience regularly in class must now be comparatively small; if Watch-nights and Covenant Services are continued the Love-feast tends to die out; ministers' terms of three years in a circuit are extended to four, five, six, and more years; old phrases of our peculiar language of Canaan are disappearing; denominationalism is dying, only the catholic elements of evangelical Christianity tend to remain. This may be because God intends to begin some great and new period in His Church by leading the different members of scattered communions back to their original unity after separation has served its own especial purpose. If at such a time Methodism as a separate entity ceases to exist, its ideals of close fellowship, of the family spirit in churches and groups of churches, its wide use of the amateur as well as of the professional in the pulpit, and something of its amazingly effective organization must remain.

Recent Foreign Theology.

Varia.

It is no surprise to find Professor Johannes Meinhold's *Introduction to the Old Testament*¹ appearing after seven years in a second edition; for, as an Introduction, it has struck out a new and fascinating path of its own. Whereas most Introductions confine themselves to the literary problems, analysis, construction, and probable date of the various books, Professor Meinhold has written an Introduction which really introduces the student not only to the literature, but to the great fields of history and theology or religion which are implicated in the literature; so that, in addition to the facts set forth in other Introductions and here presented with calmness and maturity of judgment, we can here follow the history of the people from the earliest times down to the period of the Maccabees, and we can trace with ease every step in the development of their religious thought. These three strands of interest are woven together with great skill and subtlety, and at every point we feel that we are in the hands of a master who thoroughly

¹ *Einführung in das Alte Testament* (Töpelmann, Giessen; geh. Mk. 7.40; geb. Mk. 9).

knows all that may be said against the position he is defending. It is interesting to note that he regards the Decalogue as of exilic origin, that he believes the Servant in the Servant of Jahweh Songs in Dt.-Is. to be Israel, and that he rejects Hölscher's view of Ezekiel. His warning against the temptation to draw too sharp a distinction between the prophets of weal and the prophets of woe is not untimely. More than once he pays a tribute to Wellhausen, to whom Old Testament scholarship will be for ever indebted. In a very interesting discussion on the text of the O.T. and on the Hebrew language he earnestly urges upon the theological student the great importance of a knowledge of Hebrew. But the things that interest him most in the O.T. are its 'eternal values.' No better Introduction to the O.T. can be imagined.

The social and economic conditions which prevailed in the ancient Hebrew state are discussed in a fresh and interesting way by Dr. M. Lurje.² He shows that the class divisions which are so

² *Studien zur Geschichte der wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Verhältnisse im Israelitisch-jüdischen Reiche* (Töpelmann, Giessen; geh. Mk. 3.40).