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## WHOSE GLORY IS IN THEIR SHAME.

"Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee."

HOW gradually people may drift away from their own landmarks is nowhere better illustrated than in that very prosperous denomination known as Episcopal Methodists. Its founder, John Wesley, an Episcopal clergyman, realized that the common people were being neglected religiously, and, prompted (we believe) by the best of motives, started the movement which is now world-wide in its influence, and which in these United States numerically and otherwise is the strongest of all Protestant denominations.

But prosperity has made Methodists proud, and has largely killed the spirit which gave birth to the organization. It is so changed to-day that its founder would not recognize it, and if Mr. Wesley or the Lord Jesus were to appear again and teach the same things in the same manner as of old, neither would be acceptable – neither would be allowed to preach a second sermon in any popular M.E. Church of any large city. We have evidence from Methodist sources on this subject which we will present below.

We learned recently that a new M.E. Church in Allegheny, which is completing a fine church-building about six blocks from our office, to be known as the "Calvary M.E. Church," had decided that in order not to encourage the [R1825 : page 141] poor it would rent no sittings to *servants*. At first we could scarcely credit the testimony, but were finally convinced that it must be the truth; for even a worse expression of the same spirit manifested itself in the North Avenue M.E. church, two blocks from our office, on the same street. In the latter church a spirit of rivalry with the former had sprung up; and, as a result, a meeting was called to decide whether or not they would best dismiss their present pastor, Mr. Story. At that meeting the astounding charge

against the pastor, plainly stated, was that he was bringing into the church *too many of the poorer classes*, [R1826 : page 141] and that the wealthier people were consequently leaving for other churches.

After considerable discussion, covering so far as we can learn about two weeks, it was decided to have Mr. Story remain. But Mr. Story, having learned that his stay is not the unanimous wish of the people, has very properly resigned.

Following closely our knowledge of the above facts came the article which we reproduce below, by an M.E. minister, published in a leading Methodist journal – *The Northwestern Christian Advocate* – without one word of comment or criticism, and hence endorsed by it as the new standard of Methodism which it advocates. This abundantly proves that the spirit of Methodism in Allegheny is the claimed *new* spirit of Methodism everywhere. The writer so thoroughly draws the contrasts between present and past Methodism that comment from us is needless, except to say that in our view of matters they are boasting and glorying in their shame.

Brother Compton, who sent us the clipping (formerly a Methodist), in the letter accompanying it says: "Nothing that I have ever read in the TOWER has so forcibly shown the decadence of the modern church as this complacent article by a 'Minister of the Gospel.'" Yes, the same principle, we fear, applies also to all other denominations to a greater or less extent.

We give the article entire (the *italics* are Brother Compton's).

### **"SOME FEATURES OF AMERICAN METHODISM.**

"The revival of religion in the eighteenth century under the leadership of the Wesleys and Whitefield purified the moral tone of the Anglo-Saxon race and put in operation new forces for the elevation of the unevangelized. Secular historians, both English and American, have united in crediting the movement originated by these remarkable

men with much in modern church machinery and statement of doctrine which tends to spread and plant our civilization. The doctrine of 'free will' preached by them and their successors has, with the evolution of modern experiments in secular government, been one of the most popular dogmas engaging the thoughts of men. Among our American fore-fathers this doctrine was peculiarly contagious. Throwing off the yoke of kings, and disgusted with a nationalized and priest-ridden church, what could be more enchanting and more in harmony with their political aspirations than the doctrine that every man is free to make or mar his own destiny here and hereafter?

"The doctrine of the 'new birth' upon which the Methodists insisted, and the preaching of which by Whitefield in New England was like the telling of a fresh and unheard story, likewise produced effects upon which the secular and even the unreligious looked with approbation. For this doctrine not only demanded a 'change of heart,' but also such a change in the daily life as to make the Methodist easily distinguished from the man of the world by his behavior. The great purpose for which the church existed was to 'spread scriptural holiness over these lands.' This was the legend on her banner – with this war-cry she conquered.

"Another reason for the phenomenal success of Methodism in this country is to be found in the fact that to its simple, popular service the common people were gladly welcomed. Only those who have been untrained in ritual can appreciate this apparently insignificant but really very important fact. To know that you may enter a church where you can take part in the service without the risk of displaying your ignorance of form and ceremonies is of greatest concern if you have no desire to make yourself conspicuous. Thus the plain, unstudied service of the early American Methodist church was exactly suited to the people who had but lately abandoned the pomp of Old World religions. Lawn sleeves, holy hats, diadems, crowns and robes were repugnant to their rough and simple tastes. The religion that taught them that they could make their appeals to the Almighty without an intermediary of

any kind emphasized the dignity and greatness of their manhood and appealed to their love of independence.

"The marked triumphs of this church may also be attributed in part to the fact that she had not then laid down the Master's whip of small cords. There was in those early days, from time to time, a cleansing of the church from pretenders and the unworthy which had a most wholesome effect, not only on the church itself, but also upon the surrounding community. For after the storms which often accompanied the 'turning out' of the faithless, the moral atmosphere of the whole neighborhood would be purified, and even the scoffer would see that church-membership meant something.

"A factor also assisting in the success of which I write was the pure itinerancy of the ministry which then obtained. Without doubt there were heroes and moral giants in those days. The influence of a strong, manly man, possessed by the idea that here he had 'no continuing city,' making no provision for his old age, requiring no contract to secure his support or salary, denying himself the very things the people were most greedy to obtain, and flaming with a zeal that must soon consume him, must have been abiding and beneficent wherever it was felt. **page 141**

"No mean part in achieving her commanding position in this country was played by the singing of the old-time Methodists. Serious, sensible words, full of doctrine, joined to tunes that still live and rule, there was in such singing not only a musical attraction, but a theological training whereby the people, uncouth though they might have been, were indoctrinated in the cardinal tenets of the church. The singing of a truth into the soul of child or man puts it there with a much more abiding power than can be found in any kindergarten or Quincy method of instruction. Thus, without debate, doctrines were fixed in the minds of children or of converts so that no subsequent controversy could shake them.

"It remains now to show that [R1826 : page 141] THESE ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS HAVE BECOME ANTIQUATED, AND THAT A NEW STANDARD OF SUCCESS HAS BEEN SET UP IN THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

"Let me not assume the role of boaster, but rather be the annalist of open facts, a reciter of recent history. So far as the standard of doctrines is concerned, there is no change [R1826 : page 142] in the position held by the church, but the tone and spirit which obtain in almost all her affairs show at once the presence of modern progress and light-giving innovations. The temper and complexion of this mighty church have so far changed that all who are interested in the religious welfare of America must study that change with no common concern.

"The doctrine of the new birth – 'Ye must be born again' – remains intact, but modern progress has moved the church away from the old-time strictness that prevented many good people from entering her fold, because they could not subscribe to that doctrine, and because they never had what once was called 'experimental religion.' Now Universalists and Unitarians are often found in full fellowship bravely doing their duty.

*"The ministry of the present day, polished and cultured as it is in the leading churches, is too well bred to insist on 'holiness,'* as the fathers saw that grace, but preach that broader holiness that thinketh no evil even in a man not wholly sanctified. To espouse this doctrine as it was in *the old narrow way* would make one not altogether agreeable in the Chautauqua circles and Epworth leagues of the present. **page 142**

"The old-time, simple service still lingers among the rural populations, but in those cultured circles, where correct tastes in music, art and literature obtain – among the city churches – in many instances an elaborate and elegant ritual takes the place of the voluntary and impetuous praying and shouting which once characterized the fathers. To challenge the desirability of this change is to question the superiority of culture to the uncouth and ill-bred. [R1826 : page 142]

"When the church was in an experimental stage, it possibly might have been wise to be as strict as her leaders then were. There was little to be lost *then*. But now wise, discreet and prudent men refuse to hazard the welfare of a wealthy and influential church by a bigoted administration of the law, such as will offend the rich and intellectual. If the people are not flexible, the gospel surely is. The church was made to save men, not to turn them out and discourage them. So our broader and modern ideas have crowded out and overgrown the contracted and egotistical notion that we are better than other people, who should be excluded from our fellowship. **page 142**

"The love-feast, with its dogmatic prejudices, and the class-meeting, which was to many minds almost as bad as the confessional, have been largely abandoned for Epworth leagues and Endeavor societies. **[R1826 : page 142]**

"The present cultured ministry, more than ever in the history of the church, conforms to the Master's injunction to be 'wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' *Who among them would have the folly of the old-time preachers to tell his richest official member who is rolling in luxury to sell all for God and humanity and take up his cross and follow Christ?* He might go away sorrowing – the minister, I mean.

"While evolution is the law, and progress the watchword, rashness and radicalism are ever to be deplored, and the modern Methodist minister is seldom guilty of either. The rude, rough preacher who used to accuse the God of love of being wrathful has stepped down and out to give place to his successor, who is careful in style, elegant in diction, and whose thoughts, emotions and sentiments are poetical and inoffensive.

"'The time limit,' whereby a minister may remain in one charge five years, will be abandoned at the next General Conference in 1896. In the beginning he could serve one charge but six months; the time was afterward extended to one year, then to two years, then to three, and lately to five. *But the ruling, cultured circles of the church see*

*that if her social success and standing are to compare favorably with other churches, her pastorate must be fixed* so that her strong preachers may become the centers of social and literary circles. For it must be remembered that the preacher's business is not now as it often was – to hold protracted meetings and be an evangelist. No one sees this more clearly than the preachers themselves. Great revivalists used to be the desirable preachers sought after by the churches, and at the annual conferences the preachers were wont to report the number of *conversions* during the year. Now, however, a less enthusiastic and eccentric idea rules people and priest alike. The greater churches desire those ministers that can feed the aesthetic nature, that can parry the blows of modern skepticism and attract the intellectual and polished, while at the annual conference the emphasized thing in the report of the preacher is his *missionary collection*. The modern Methodist preacher is an excellent collector of money, thereby entering the very heart of his people as he could not by any old-fashioned exhortation or appeal.

"How great the lesson that has been so well learned by these leaders of Christian thought, viz., *that the gospel should never offend the cultured and polite taste. To a church that can so flexibly conform to the times* the gates of the future open wide with a cheery greeting. What more fitting motto can be found for her than the herald angels sang: 'Peace on earth, good will to men.'"

– *Rev. Chas. A. Crane.*

Danville, Ill.

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