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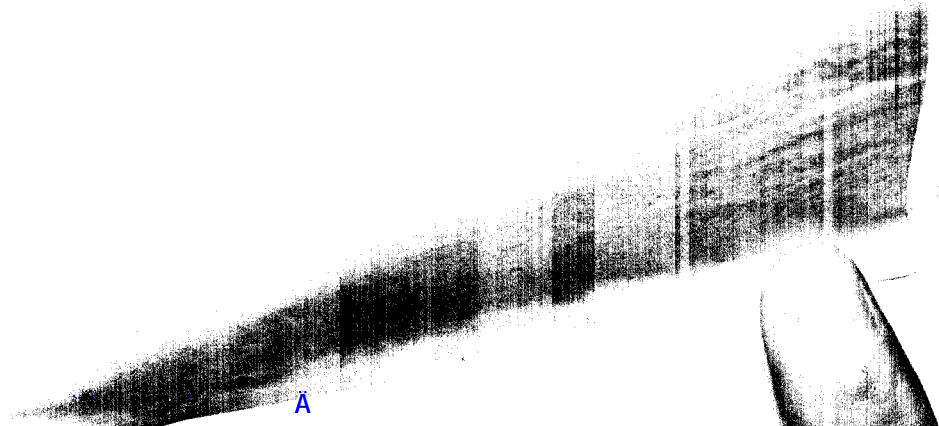
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# HISTORY OF METHODISM.



REV. JOHN WESLEY.

THE HISTORY



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OF THE

Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century,

CALLED

# METHODISM.

BY

ABEL STEVENS, LL.D.

VOLUME I.

Origin of Methodism to Death of Whitefield.

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## PREFACE.

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As a great religious development of the last century, affecting largely our common Protestantism, and, unquestionably, destined to affect it still more profoundly, Methodism does not belong exclusively to the denominations which have appropriated its name. I have therefore attempted to write its history in a liberal spirit, and to consider it, not as a sectarian, but as a general religious movement, ostensibly within the Church of England, at least during the lives of the chief Methodist founders, but reaching beyond it to most of the Protestantism of England and America. I have endeavoured steadily to keep this point of view till the movement was reduced into sectarian organizations.

I am not aware that this plan has been followed by any of the numerous writers on Methodism, Calvinistic or Arminian, except Isaac Taylor, and Dr. James Porter in his excellent "Compendium," our best practical manual of Methodism. If Southey's Life of Wesley should be considered another exception, yet its questionable purpose, and its total misapprehension of the providential design of Methodism, have deprived it, among religious readers, of any importance, aside from the romantic interest of its facts.

This comprehensive plan is not only historically just, but it affords special advantage to the variety and interest of the narrative: for whereas the Calvinistic writers, on the one side, have had as their chief characters, Whitefield, the Countess of Huntingdon, Howell Harris, Berridge, Venn, Romaine, Madan; and the Arminian authors, on the other, the Wesleys, Grimshaw, Fletcher, Nelson; I claim them all as "workers together with God;" and the marvellous "itinerancy" of Whitefield runs

parallel with the equally marvellous travels and labours of Wesley. Marking distinctly the contrasts of the Calvinistic and Arminian sections of Methodism, I have nevertheless been able to show that much more harmony existed between them through most of their history than has usually been supposed; that in fact the essential unity of the movement was maintained, with but incidental and salutary variations, down to the death of Whitefield. In this respect, at least, I trust my pages will teach a lesson of Christian charity and catholicity which shall be grateful to all good men who may read them; and as it is more the office of history to narrate than polemically to discuss opinions, I have endeavoured not to impair the much-needed lesson in my accounts of parties. It has been as impossible as inexpedient to dissemble my own theological opinions, but it is hoped that they will not be found unnecessarily obtruded. As the Wesleyan section of the movement was the most ostensible, and took finally an organized and permanent form, it necessarily takes the lead in the earlier part of the narrative, and will almost exclusively occupy the latter part of it. I have endeavoured, however, to give the fullest attention, required by the plan of the work, to other Methodist bodies.

The present volume brings the narrative down to the death of Whitefield, a period after which Calvinistic Methodism, though it will continue to receive due notice, loses its prominence, and the history of the movement becomes distinctively Wesleyan. The second and third volumes will complete the history of British Methodism.

I have endeavoured to do justice to the Lay Preachers of Wesley, many of whom, though overshadowed by the leaders of Methodism, were its noblest heroes. Southey is the only writer who has said much respecting them; but he has referred to them in almost every instance for the purpose of citing proofs of his charges of fanaticism and insanity, though he could not disguise his admiration of their extraordinary characters, and they afford the chief romance of his volumes. He has given sketches of eight of them; I have given more than that number in the present volume; many, however, of historical importance, who

were active during my present period, do not appear within it. The reader will hereafter find that I have not ignored their claims, but postponed them to more suitable points of the narrative.

The Ecclesiastical Economy, the Doctrines, Psalmody, Literature, etc., of Methodism are noticed as the narrative proceeds, their historical development being distinctly traced; but they will be more fully discussed in a book of the second volume.

I have authenticated the most important facts of the narrative by marginal references; in order, however, not to encumber the volume unnecessarily with notes, I have in most instances given my authority in the beginning of each chapter, without repeating it except when some intervening reference has made it necessary. The number of publications relating to early Methodism would be incredible to ordinary readers. Whether from a curious or a hostile motive, a "Catalogue of Works that have been published in Refutation of Methodism from its Origin in 1729 to 1846, compiled by H. C. Decanver," was printed in Philadelphia by John Pennington in 1846. It is not complete but comprises the titles of no less than three hundred and eighty-four publications. The compiler was a Protestant Episcopalian; "Decanver" is his *nom de plume*; he has given his real name in the original manuscript, which, with the printed catalogue and one hundred and forty-three of the most curious of these works, he has deposited in the Library of the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church in New York city. Whatever may have been his design, he has done a valuable service to Methodism, and enriched the library of that institution with the best collection of such documents in the United States, perhaps the best in the world. If we add to these the works in favour of Methodism, and others bearing directly or indirectly on its history, the list can hardly be short of fifteen hundred. Of course I have not examined all these; but I know of none necessary to my purpose which have not been consulted.

I am under many obligations to Rev. Drs. Whedon, (of the Methodist Quarterly Review,) Hibbard, (of the Northern Chris-