

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

W. Edmund Smith

God's greatest blessing to the world has been a good and holy man. Jesus was the God-man, unique as Saviour and Lord. But there have been many who have followed in his train in sacrificial service, to make operative in the hearts of men the glorious redemption accomplished by Christ.

No man, since the Apostle Paul, has done so great a work for the salvation of men, in his own and succeeding generations, as John Wesley, a little legalistic, moralistic Anglican priest, whose heart was strangely warmed on May 27th, 1738. I wish to devote these notes to the memory of that man to whom we as holiness people, owe more than to any man except Christ. We may tell something of his character and his work in a rhyme we made years ago.

A Tribute to John Wesley

Son of a mother who was blessed with children
near a score;
Son of old Oxford, versed in all her learning
and her lore;
Son of the Church whose low estate by his
great heart was mourned;
A son of God, by a second birth, when his
heart was strangely warmed
Braver than captains of the fight, or admirals
of the sea;
To carry the standard of spiritual might with
a heaven-born chivalry
With pulpits closed and church in a rage, his
heart was calm and brave;
He caught the vision of open fields when he
stood on his father's grave;
"The world is my Parish"! never before a
slogan like this had been raised
By a mortal preacher; Earth and hell at its
boldness were amazed;
They poured out their wrath and their ridicule,
their censure and their blame—
To put out the fire, but to no avail—it added
fuel to the flame.
The mob urged on by the parish priest, came
to mock and threaten and rave;
They were caught in the spell of the Gospel
truth and felt its power to save.
In England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the re-
vival made advance
To save Old England from the woes and sor-
rows of bloody France.
The desert rejoiced and bloomed like the rose
in the hearts of those redeemed;
The Sun of Righteousness in love on the land
now brightly beamed
The slave of sin felt his shackles break and
answered the call from above
To preach the Gospel, and became an itinerant
of love.
From early morn to the noon-day sun, and the
evening darkness came—
Year after year, this knight rode on, with his
heart in a burning flame;
Some could laugh and sneer, others scoff and
jeer and many fall by the way—
Neither termagant wife nor the love of ease
could Wesley's progress stay.
He gave to religion a singing heart, and a
tongue to speak of the love
Shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost—
the Comforter from above.
He made a coffin for awful "Decrees" and
buried them deep in the grave,
And proclaimed a Gospel for all mankind—a
Jesus who all would save.
He came to his grave at a good old age; what
a battle this hero fought!

He died with the praise of God on his lips
shouting "What is it God hath wrought".
Instead of scorn and base ridicule, blessings
crowned his hoary head;
His monument stand in the Abbey grand
'mongst England's illustrious dead.
What would Wesley think of those today who
sneer at the sanctified!
Who call themselves Methodists, yet with the
world and pomp they are close allied;
The learning and pomp, the numbers and
wealth would move him to sorrow and
tears;
For the future of Methodism Wesley pressed
his growing ominous fears.
He would see fulfilled his prophecy when his
conference he addressed;
"I fear that Methodists in time may become
just like the rest."
Wesley would find his truest sons today are
sheltered in other folds;
They find that the faith which he found then,
today still securely holds.
We are Methodists, called by another name,
and are willing reproach to bear;
If we suffer with Jesus here below, we shall
triumph with Wesley there.

Mr. Wesley had no ambition to build up a
great organization. He went in for quality
rather than quantity. One with God was in
the majority. Like Gideon, he gained effici-
ency in his ranks, by pruning the membership
of the "Societies." He says often like this in
his journal: "I cut off twenty members from
the society in E - - - I think the Lord may be
able to do something there now."

If Methodists did not walk straight they
walked out. What would Wesley think if one
of his preachers offered a prize to the one who
would bring in the most members in a certain
time?

He said, "I find that as the Methodists in-
crease in material wealth they decline in spiri-
tual fervor and power; I have no fear that the
people called Methodists shall ever become ex-
tinct, but I have grave fears that as they in-
crease in numbers, wealth and prestige they
will become a dead formal sect just like the
rest."

Alas, there are many so-called great and
eloquent men in the high offices of the Meth-
odist church who wax most eloquent when
they are talking of the sacrifice and glory of
the early days. They, like the proud Pharisees,
build monuments to the good and holy of the
past, but they have only indifference and often
ridicule and scorn for those who are preaching
entire sanctification by faith today as Wesley
did, and are seeing souls gain the blessing
True Methodists are as much persona non
grata to the ecclesiasticism that calls itself
Methodist, as Wesley and his followers were
to the Established Church.

How Wesley denounced the pride of luxur-
ious living, especially as seen in costly array
in dress. If anyone today says anything quite
moderate on that subject he is called an old
"Crackpot" or something worse. Wesley be-
lieved that a holy heart would love neatness
and simplicity and would sacrifice to give
more to those in need.

Mr. Wesley's preachers got much strong ad-
vice from him and they would take it, for he
was the incarnation of his teaching. He
warned against laziness, physical, mental and
spiritual. He said if you do not love books
and like to study, go back to your former
work; it is evident that you were never called
to be a Methodist preacher. He said, "If you
do not read good books and study diligently

you can never become more than a mediocre
preacher."

It is a fact, that Wesley's preachers that
came from the shop, the mine or the field be-
came able expositors of the word. Some be-
came quite proficient in Greek and Hebrew.
Bishop Asbury who had had limited school
privileges, and rode thousands of miles every
year through the forests of America, braving
all the privations and dangers of the forest
full of wild beasts and wilder men, taught him-
self Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

Mr. Wesley wrote his sermons. He warned
his preachers against yelling and screaming in
the pulpit. He said that young Walsh, whom
he called one of the finest Hebrew scholars he
had ever met, killed himself by the "Abominal
habit of screaming."

Mr. Wesley was a most genial and sociable
man—a brilliant conversationalist. The great
Dr. Johnson, whose chief business was to talk
for the delight and the edification of those who
came to listen, told Mr. Wesley's sister: "Your
brother is the most provoking man I have ever
met. He comes to visit me, but just as I am
becoming captivated with his wonderful con-
versation, he pulls out his watch, and says,
"you will please excuse me, I have business
at this hour," and perhaps he is going down to
the prison to talk to some of the inmates who
are going to be hanged.

He said I am always in haste and never in a
hurry." "I desire a league offensive and defen-
sive with every soldier of Jesus Christ. If you
truly love Jesus and know his saving grace,
give me your hand." He did not like Calvinism
and tore the nice covering off it. But he loved
Whitefield. He never forbade anyone member-
ship in his Societies who believed in the "Five
points."

"The elements were so mixed in him, that
Grace (not nature) could stand him up and
say to all the world this is a Man." The church
needs today another Wesley. But alas the very
movement he started would have little place
for him. They have become like the rest.

THE BUILDER AND THE WRECKER

I watched them tearing a building down —
A gang of men in a busy town;
With a "Yo, heave, ho!" and a lusty yell
They swung a beam and the side wall fell.

I asked the foreman, "Are these men skilled,
And the kind you would hire if you were to
build?"

He laughed and said, "Why, no, indeed,
Just common laborers is all I need;
They can easily wreck in a day or two
That which took builders years to do."

So I said to myself, as I went on my way,
"What part in the game of life do I play?
Am I shaping my deeds to a well-made plan,
Patiently doing the best that I can,
Carefully measuring with rule and square?
Doing each task with thoughtful care?
Or am I a wrecker—who walks the town —
Content with the labor of tearing down?"

Jesus, the life, the truth, the way,
In whom I now believe:
As taught by Thee, in faith I pray,
Expecting to receive.

Forgive and make my nature whole;
My inbred malady remove;
To perfect health restore my soul,
To perfect holiness and love.

—Unknown