

**BACK TO OXFORD: A
SEARCH FOR
THE ESSENTIALS OF
METHODISM**

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Back to Oxford: A Search for the Essentials of Methodism by James Henry Potts

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JAMES HENRY POTTS

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ESSENTIALS OF METHODISM

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FOREWORD

METHODISM, like other important movements, has certain elements, which either originated with it or sprang into being under it, which constitute its essentials and are necessary to its perpetuity. These elements are its vital life-strands, its ruddy heart-drops, the very essence and proof of its reality. They have given it name, character, history, and prestige. They are the secret of its early power and the cause of its perennial fruitfulness. They render it an interesting theme for study, a worthy subject for prayer, and an inspiring cause for work. They should engage the attention of every lover of earnest Christianity, if happily we, like the Methodist fathers, may in our day prove a tremendous force for righteousness, a resistless power for reformation, and an indispensable agency for spiritual progress.

The world needs unquestionable truth, it needs divine light, it needs moral earnestness,

it needs evangelistic skill, it needs effective leadership in all that elevates, ennobles, purifies, and saves. Can Methodism furnish these requisites? Has it the cardinal principles, the inherent values, the vital forces, the adequate inspirations, the available methods that, under present conditions, can make it a new godsend to society? Let us look into this subject, study it, master it, apply it, develop it, become a part of it, and go with it to victory.

God has been in Methodism. Let us hold fast the things which he has sanctioned and make them a tenfold greater power to call down spiritual blessing now and lift men up to God.

THE AUTHOR.

Detroit.

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BACK TO OXFORD

ORIGIN OF METHODISM

To understand the essentials of Methodism we must study its origin, analyze its character, and consider its work. This will not be an irksome task, because the theme is of such lively interest.

As to the exact moment when Methodism originated, no man knoweth. The *period* of its origin is a matter of history, but not its day and hour.

It was in 1726 when Charles Wesley, "a sprightly, rollicking young fellow, with more genius than grace," was elected to Christ Church, Oxford. John Wesley was then serving as his father's curate at Epworth. John had previously spoken to Charles about experimental religion, but Charles had said,

“What, would you have me to be a saint all at once?”

But Charles began at once to do saintly work. He attended the weekly sacraments, and induced two or three other students to attend with him. When John returned to Oxford he also joined the band. The religious regularity of the boys led a young collegian to call them Methodists, and “as the name was new and quaint it clave to them immediately.” John Wesley became director of the club, the members of which increased until upward of twenty persons—three of whom were college tutors and the rest bachelors of arts, or undergraduates—demonstrated their willingness to suffer reproach under the guidance of “the curator of the Holy Club” as John Wesley was called.

METHOD

“Every night they met together, to review what each had done during the day, and to consult what should be done the day follow-