

P R E F A C E .

THE publication of this first volume of Mr. Wesley's Life, having been delayed much beyond the general expectation, the members of the committee, who so generously united to encourage and assist me in carrying on the work, the subscribers to it, and the public at large, have a right to expect some explanation of the causes which have occasioned the delay. I shall mention two principal causes, though others have concurred in a less degree. The first is, the cruel and persevering opposition of *some* of the Methodist preachers, against the execution of the work. I had determined to write, not only the Life of Mr. Wesley, but a history of Methodism, with the utmost impartiality; to describe things as they have been, and as they are, without the false coloring that the spirit of a party will always give to history: but it was impossible to see with indifference the conduct of *these* preachers. Mr. Wesley never met with a more malignant opposition in the whole course of his labors, than I have experienced for attempting to describe them. Nor was I alone the object of their abuse; my friends also, shared it with me. It sometimes appeared to me, that they carried their opposition to such outrageous and indecent lengths, on purpose to excite an opposition to them, in the Life itself; that they might have a fairer pretext to advise the people not to read it. I determined to disappoint them; and to take no further notice of them, than the connection of the history required, and without any particular reference to the present dispute. Whenever, therefore, I found my mind affected by their conduct, so that I could not write with that calmness and ease that I wished, I laid the work wholly aside, which has been no small cause of the delay. This may be called a weakness: be it so; I never pretended to be free from the common feelings of human nature; or to be insensible of the improper

conduct of others, towards my friends. My business has been, to guard my mind against any improper influence it might have on my judgment, in describing facts that have taken place in the establishment of Methodism, and to distinguish between the rational and liberal principles of Mr. Wesley, on which the Methodist societies were founded, and the narrow and arbitrary conduct of a few individuals: and this, by the grace of God, I hope has been carefully done.

The second cause of delay has been the bankruptcy of the printer I first employed. This has occasioned a considerable loss, a part of the printed sheets being damaged, and a delay of several months. I am persuaded, however, that the work has received some improvements from the length of time it has been in hand. It may have defects at present, but they would have been greater and more numerous, had it been written in a hurry, immediately after the death of Mr. Wesley.

When I began to write the Life of Mr. Charles Wesley, I did not expect it would have been so long as it is. But the materials increased so fast upon me, as I proceeded, that I could easily have filled the whole volume with them. As they were new, and appeared to me important, I could not prevail on myself to abridge them, more than I have done. I thought it a pity that a man of so excellent a character should lie hid under a heap of rubbish, which envy had thrown upon him. A part of this rubbish, at least, I have removed, and he will again stand forward to the view of the public. I doubt not but his friends will recognize him in the following sheets; and I hope will be introduced to his company with pleasure and profit.

As the Life of Mr. John Wesley comprehends a great variety of subjects, on which men think very differently, it cannot be expected that it should be so written, as to obtain universal approbation. But my leading object in writing this Life, has not been, either general approbation or profit; but truly and fairly to delineate Mr. Wesley's character, in doing which, I hoped to promote religion and virtue.

I return my warmest thanks to those persons who have communicated to me any private papers or letters, that were in their possession; and also to those who have assisted me in the present work, by their advice. In the early part of Mr. John Wesley's Life, I have made use of the original papers relating to him, published by Dr.

Priestley. His collection alone is defective; and so was that in my possession, without his. Dr. Priestley tells us in his preface, "The following letters were given to me by the late Mr. Badcock, as great curiosities of their kind, with a view to their publication after the death of Mr. John Wesley. They were given to him by the grand-daughter of Mr. Samuel Wesley, the eldest brother of John, and I believe with the same view. Mr. John Wesley, as I learned from Mr. Badcock, was very desirous of getting these letters into his possession, but the daughter and grand-daughter of Mr. Samuel, being offended at his conduct, would never deliver them to him." Thus far Dr. Priestley. I am not at all disposed to call Dr. Priestley's veracity in question, but it appears to me there is some mystery in the affair, which I wish to see removed, and which is the reason of bringing the matter forward. Mr. Badcock wrote to Mr. Wesley, on the subject of his brother Samuel's manuscripts, and at the same time sent him one, which he had obtained. His letter is dated South-Moulton, Devonshire, April 22, 1780; and the part of it that relates to the manuscripts, is as follows:

"REV. SIR,

"The M.S. which accompanies this address, will, I doubt not, carry its own authenticity with it, to *you*. It fell into my hands some time since, by means of the departure of Mr. Mansell, for Ireland, on account of debts contracted at Barnstaple. This person married a daughter of your niece Mrs. Earle. They both died soon after he absconded. Of these particulars, it is likely you are not ignorant. A gentleman of Barnstaple, was for some time in possession of the books and M.S.S. Many of them were sold: and others, together with some papers of a family nature, were sent to Mansell; who, if I mistake not, lives with his mother, at or near Dublin.

"I have seen some other M.S.S. of your mother's; and wish I could have secured them for you. I think they have much intrinsic excellence: and to a son, they must be doubly acceptable. If I should have it in my power to get more of these papers, I will take care to send them to you."

The attentive reader will perceive, that these two accounts, not only differ, but in one instance flatly contradict each other. After Mr. Badcock's letter, there certainly was a fault somewhere in Dr. Priestley's obtaining possession of the manuscripts: but where the fault lay, I do not pretend to determine.

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