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JOSEPH BENSON

**A Compilation by Duane V. Maxey
From the HDM Library**

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INTRODUCTION

As mhalb-10.jpg, a picture of Joseph Benson accompanies this compilation, which consists of the following material: "Rev. Joseph Benson, A.M.," from hdm0093, "The Lives of Eminent Methodist Ministers, by P. Douglass Gorrie; "Joseph Benson," from hdm0699, "Centenary Cameos," by Osie P. Fitzgerald; and finally, a paragraph about Joseph Benson from hdm0720, the "Cyclopedia of Methodism" (B-Listings) by Matthew Simpson.

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Part 1

REV. JOSEPH BENSON, A.M.

From hdm0093, "The Lives of Eminent Methodist Ministers"

By P. Douglass Gorrie

This distinguished Methodist minister was born in Melmerdy, County of Cumberland, England, on the 25th day of January, 1748. His father was a farmer or good character, and in comfortable circumstances; and who designed his son for the ministry of the English established Church. At a very early age Joseph became the subject of serious religious impressions, which never wore off, until he became the happy partaker of the saving grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

While yet young, Joseph was placed at the village school, and afterwards under the care of a Presbyterian minister named Dean, who was pastor of the Presbyterian Church, in the village where his father resided. He continued under this gentleman's instruction pursuing a course of classical study, until he was sixteen years of age, when he became a teacher in a school in a neighboring town, where he remained for one year. It was while engaged in this school, that

Joseph became convinced that notwithstanding his morality he must be born again before he could see the kingdom of God. Through the influence of a pious cousin, and the knowledge gained by reading Mr. Wesley's sermons, and hearing Methodist preaching he was at length constrained to trust in Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, and he obtained the witness of his adoption into the family of God.

After his conversion, he united with a Methodist Society This step gave great offense to his father, who was a zealous son of "the church," and believing that he would take but little comfort at home, on account of his father's opposition, and there being but little opportunity for improving his mind there, Joseph with his father's consent, left the parental mansion, and parted from his father, both being overcome by a flood of tears. The farewell words they spoke were the last they ever spoke to each other, as father and son never met again on earth.

At this eventful period in the history of his life, Mr. Benson was only seventeen years of age -- an age of all others when a young man needs the aid of parental restraint and advice. Besides, he had but a small portion of this world's gear to take with him -- so little indeed, that his legs and feet had to answer in the place of horses and carriage while pursuing his outward journey. Before leaving home, Joseph had heard that there was a vacancy in the office of Classical master in Mr. Wesley's school in Kingswood. He accordingly bent his steps towards Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where he hoped to meet Mr. Wesley; the latter, however, had left for London before he arrived. Being disappointed in securing a passage on board of a vessel to London, Mr. Benson commenced the journey on foot, although in the depth of winter. He had not proceeded far, however, before he fell in company with a gentleman who was acquainted with Mr. Wesley, and who after learning the particulars of young Benson's case, kindly paid his stage fare to London. On his arrival at the latter city he was again disappointed about meeting Mr. Wesley; he, however, remained in the city about four weeks, and shortly after received the appointment of Classical master in Kingswood School. The appointment thus conferred upon him, shows the confidence which Mr. Wesley had in the piety and classical attainments of one so young; and the confidence was not misplaced, as Mr. Benson's subsequent history proves.

After his arrival at Kingswood, he entered upon the duties of his office with a degree of zeal and ardor peculiar to himself, and by his knowledge of the classics, and his manner of imparting instruction, soon gained not only the confidence of his pupils, but the further confidence and respect of Mr. Wesley.

While engaged in Kingswood he made his first attempt at preaching. Being destitute of natural talents for extemporaneous efforts, it was with some difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to pray publicly, and preach to the colliers in the neighborhood. But although slow of speech, his labors were greatly blessed to the good of the scholars committed to his care, so much so, that several of them were awakened to a sense of sin, and were led to Christ. He remained at the school in Kingswood for nearly four years, and when he left it, he was followed by the best wishes and respects of all who knew him, or had been benefited by his instructions.

In 1769 the Countess of Huntingdon founded a college in Wales for the benefit of young men who were candidates for the ministry in the established Church, or in either of the evangelical dissenting churches. To the presidency of this institution, Mr. Fletcher, as stated in the preceding

chapter, was duly appointed by her ladyship. On the recommendation of Mr. Wesley, and the advice of Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Benson was appointed Head Master of the College, a situation at once awfully responsible, and the duties of which were complicated and arduous, especially for a young man of twenty-one years of age.

In the spring of 1770, he took up his residence at Trevecca, the place where the College was located, and became well satisfied with his situation and the flattering prospects of the College. He was also much beloved and respected by the gentlemen students and the patrons of the College.

Mr. Benson during the succeeding winter vacation was absent at Oxford "keeping terms," and during his absence, a zealous advocate of the Calvinistic Creed visited the seat of the College, and propagated the seeds of dissension and disunion among the students, and others connected with the College. It should be known to the reader, that at this period, much excitement prevailed in England and Wales, in relation to the doctrines of Calvinism on the one hand, and of Arminianism on the other. This excitement was mostly felt in the two Methodistic bodies, known as the Whitefieldian, and the Wesleyan, and at this particular period, was at its height. Mr. Whitefield, Lady Huntingdon, and others were disposed to defend the Calvinistic views: while Mr. Wesley, Mr. Fletcher, and Mr. Benson, arrayed themselves on the opposite side of free grace, and God's impartial love to all mankind. It was at length determined by the countess, to dismiss all Arminians from her College, whether teachers or students, and consequently Mr. Benson had to take his leave after a short but useful term of nine months' duration, as Head Master. On leaving the College, Lady Huntingdon cheerfully gave him a testimonial of her high regard for his character, as a gentleman and as a teacher. As before stated, Mr. Fletcher on hearing the fact of Mr. Benson's abrupt dismissal on account of his religious views, immediately resigned the Presidency of the College.

We have stated above that Mr. Benson was at Oxford keeping terms. He had in March 1769, entered his name on the books of the University, and from that period he regularly and systematically cultivated every part of a University education. After having been at the University two years, and having pursued all the branches pre-requisite to ordination in the Church of England, he concluded in the fear of God to take upon himself holy orders. It was necessary, however previously to ordination, that his tutor in the University should sign his testimonials, but on hearing that Mr. Benson had been a local preacher under Mr. Wesley, and that he had actually dared as such to preach to the poor colliers of Kingswood, he peremptorily, and in the true spirit of bigotry refused to sign such testimonials, or even to act longer toward him in the capacity of tutor. Mr. Benson remonstrated in the spirit of kindness against such ill-usage, and although seconded in his effort to obtain his testimonials by the principal of St. Edmund's Hall, yet the tutor remained inflexible in his refusal, and Mr. Benson left Oxford.

After leaving Oxford, Mr. Benson obtained testimonials from a respectable clergyman in Wales, and a large and respectable parish was obtained for him. His testimonials were countersigned by the bishop of St. Davids, but as the parish which had been presented to him, was within the diocese of Worcester he applied to the Bishop of Worcester for ordination, but the latter refused to ordain him, ostensibly for the reason, that he had not received his Academical degree,

but truly, as it is to be feared, for the same reason that his bigoted tutor would not sign his testimonials.

We have before stated that Mr. Benson did not naturally possess a capacity for extemporizing. For this reason probably he was the more anxious to obtain orders in the Established Church, as in that case the prayers and sermons required of him would all be written, and extemporizing be unnecessary. But the great Head of the Church had other fields of labor for him to occupy, and more extensive work for him to do than to shut himself up in an obscure country parish; hence, he ever after considered these obstacles in the way of procuring episcopal ordination, as so many providential hindrances, closing up what to him then appeared to be the path of duty, but in reference to which he was afterwards convinced was a mistake.

After leaving Oxford, he visited Bristol and preached almost every day, and at the session of the Methodist Conference in August 1771, he was received on trial as an itinerant preacher, and was appointed by Mr. Wesley to labor on the London circuit, where he continued one year with more or less success. At the ensuing Conference, he was received into full connection, and was appointed to Newcastle circuit. In 1773 he was appointed to Edinburgh circuit in Scotland; and although at first he felt rather opposed to the idea of going into a strange country, and among a people so different in their habits and religious views and practices from the people of England, yet he made up his mind fully to acquiesce cheerfully in the allotment of Providence, as indicated by the appointment.

Mr. Benson labored in Edinburgh for three years, and near the close of the third year he remarks in his diary: "My heart is so united to this people, that I find it very hard to leave this place. I never was among a more kind and loving people than those in our Society at Edinburgh. Many a happy and edifying hour, have I spent among them. Many a time has my soul been blessed in answer to their prayers, both in public and in private. May the Lord continue to favor them with his presence, and reward them for all their kindness to me." After leaving Edinburgh he was again appointed to Newcastle circuit, where he remained for two years with great honor to himself and profit to the cause of God in that place. In 1778, Mr. Benson was stationed in Manchester, and while laboring in this place he was united in marriage to Miss Thompson, a pious and intelligent lady, who resided in Leeds. In company with Mrs. Benson he immediately returned to his circuit, and proved himself to be no less arduous and engaged after, than before his marriage.

At the Conference of 1780, Mr. Benson was appointed to the Leeds circuit, which at this period was large and extensive. During the period of his ministry in other places he had in a great measure overcome his want of capacity for extemporizing; he had in fact become not only a forcible but an eloquent extemporaneous speaker. This combined with his zeal and literary acquirements rendered his labors acceptable wherever he was stationed, and being attended with the divine blessing were not only acceptable, but highly useful. After spending two years in Leeds he was appointed to Bradford circuit, and in 1784, was stationed in the Sheffield circuit, where during his pastoral labors among them, the members of the Society increased three hundred and fifty in number. From Sheffield he removed to Hull, where he spent one year, and from thence he was stationed in Birmingham. It was during his residence in this city that the venerable and apostolic John Wesley departed this life. The intelligence of his death, which he obtained on the day following his decease (March 2d, 1791), greatly affected Mr. Benson. On the 13th of March he

delivered a discourse on the occasion, his text being 2 Kings ii. 12, "My father! my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" Many hundreds came to hear the sermon who could not gain admission to the chapel. The discourse being lengthy he did not finish it at that time, but deferred the remainder until the 15th, when the chapel was again crowded to its utmost capacity.

Birmingham was the scene of many disgraceful riots of a political character during Mr. Benson's residence in that place. Referring to the same, he says in his journal under date of July 15th, 1791: "Yesterday, according to appointment, several gentlemen met at the hotel in this town with a view to commemorate the French revolution. The mob collected and hissed them as they went in; and in the dusk of the evening gathering in greater numbers they broke all the windows of the hotel. Then hastening to Dr. Priestley's meeting-house, in a little time they burned it to the ground. They then proceeded to what is called the Old Meeting House, and burned it likewise. This morning they set fire to Dr. Priestley's dwelling-house, which is about two miles from town, and burned it also with all its furniture. The same destructive work they have pursued all day."

Under date of July 16th, Mr. Benson continues: "This day we have been in continual alarm. The mob reigns without control. The attack made upon them by the constables yesterday only inflamed them the more; and today, they are continuing their depredations. Hundreds of families are removing their property, and the whole town is in utter consternation. May the Lord be our defense and habitation. On the succeeding day -- Sunday -- a body of light-horse arrived in town, which effectually put a stop to further rioting."

Shortly after this, Mr. Benson was in imminent danger of losing his life by being thrown from his horse, which had taken fright and become unmanageable. He was trodden under the horse's feet, and by some means was dragged a considerable distance before he became disengaged from the animal. His under, and over-coats were torn to pieces, but excepting a few slight bruises, himself escaped without further injury. "Surely," said Mr. Benson, "I am laid under fresh obligations to live to the glory of my great deliverer!"

In May, Mr. Benson removed to Manchester, and while there he volunteered his services in connection with other ministerial brethren to proceed to Liverpool, for the purpose of healing certain dissensions which had arisen in the Methodist Society in that place, growing out of holding service in Church hours, and of the administration of the Lord's Supper in the Chapel of that place. To understand the cause of division it may be necessary to state, that previous to this time, the Methodists in England, were considered as an integral portion of the Church of England, and were required by the rules of the Society, to attend the services of the Established Church, as also, to receive the Lord's Supper there, if permitted by the officiating clergyman to do so. The Methodist services were held at such hours as did not interfere with the services of the Church. About this time, however, it was thought proper by the Conference to allow in cities, and large towns, the holding of Methodist services in church hours, and if the preacher stationed among the people in those places was ordained, they were permitted to receive the sacrament in their own house of worship. This practice at first was considered by many of the Methodists, as a bold and dangerous innovation. And as the Society in Liverpool had just had the innovation introduced among them, an unhappy division arose among the members in relation thereto. Mr. Benson and his brethren, however, were by the divine blessing, rendered instrumental in healing the dissensions, and restoring peace between the parties.

In 1794, by the earnest request of the trustees of the chapels in Bristol, Mr. Benson was stationed in that city. In this place also, divisions and distractions had existed for several months, which induced Mr. Benson to doubt the propriety of his being stationed there, and which rendered his situation for a portion of the time he there remained, unpleasant in the extreme. But he went to his appointment in the name of the Prince of Peace, and was instrumental in adopting measures which secured not only a lasting peace to the Societies in Bristol, but by his "plan of pacification," laid the foundation of that general union, which has since continued with scarcely any abatement throughout the connection.

While in Bristol, he made a tour of several weeks' continuance to the west of England. It was not, however, a tour of leisure to him, as his journal abundantly proves. Day after day, and week after week, he preached to large congregations wherever he went, and such was the power of the word of God, as administered by him, that hundreds trembled, and scores were brought to the "knowledge of the truth." After his return to Bristol, he spent the remainder of the conference year in strengthening and confirming the hearts of the people of his important charge, with the assurance that his labors among them had not been "in vain in the Lord."

In 1795, Mr. Benson was again appointed to Leeds, where he remained for two years, and during this period he labored with his usual diligence to secure the salvation of souls. His talents and zeal were in some measure appreciated by the vast crowds of people that from time to time went to hear him, and his labors were attended with great success, as God gave him in this place, many seals to his ministry. After leaving Leeds, he went to Hull. At the latter place he again narrowly escaped death by a fall from his horse, which having fell down upon his knees and face, suddenly pitched Mr. Benson over his head. Mr. Benson, however, escaped with very little injury.

In 1798, by the partiality of his brethren, Mr. Benson was elected to the responsible station of President of the Conference. This station he filled with acceptability to the Conference, with honor to himself, and with profit to the connection.

In 1800, Mr. Benson was appointed Superintendent of the London circuit, which was a great and important charge. During his stay here, he records one or two instances of sudden death, the recital of which may be interesting to the reader. On the 12th of April, while Mr. Benson was praying before sermon in the Queen-street Chapel, a Mr. Falzham was taken suddenly ill, and after groaning for a few moments, expired on the spot. "Some of the friends," says Mr. Benson, "bore him down into the vestry, where I found him on the table, on his back, much altered, when the service was over. It was an awful and affecting scene to those who were present." Another instance which greatly affected Mr. Benson, was the sudden death of Mr. Pine of Bristol. He was attending a prayer-meeting. After two or three had prayed, Mr. Pine observed that they would no longer meet together as they had done; and the very next morning he died in his bed, with scarcely a moment's warning.

After having spent three very pleasant and profitable years as Superintendent of London circuit, Mr. Benson was elected sole editor of the Methodist Magazine, a periodical which had been commenced by Mr. Wesley, and which had been continued since his death with great and increasing patronage. Mr. Benson was elected to this office by the unanimous vote of the

Conference, which at once shows the confidence which that body placed in his talents and piety. The office to which he was thus elected, he continued to fill with great acceptability, until the time of his death; his residence, as a matter of course, being thenceforward fixed in London. But although called to labor in another sphere, he continued to exert himself as a minister of Jesus Christ, by preaching frequently as occasion might require, or doors of usefulness open. On one of these occasions, while preaching at Lambeth, he gave an account of the conversion and happy death of a once noted actress of great popularity, by the name of Mrs. Boothe. "After returning home from the theater on a certain evening, the house in which she lodged was so suddenly consumed by fire, that it was with much difficulty she made her escape from the flames. Her exertions on the occasion, together with her mental agitation, brought on a fever, during the continuance of which, she was convinced that her mode of life was opposed to the spirit and practice of religion. She left the stage, and sought for rest and peace; but in vain at first. She felt an aching void; and nothing she could do, or enjoy, afforded her the least degree of happiness.

"She retired to reside in a village in which a Sunday-school was established, and occasionally heard an exhortation from some of the teachers employed in it. By means of these pious men, she soon learned that what she needed in order to her happiness, was a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, together with its concomitants -- pardon peace, and joy. She became a teacher in the school just noticed, and was grateful to God for so far subduing her proud heart, as to make her willing in a sphere so humble, to make some good use of the talents which she had so much abused.

"After changing her residence to Lambeth, she frequently heard preaching at the Methodist chapel. She soon was enabled to exercise faith in Christ as her Redeemer, and was filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. She joined the Methodist Society, of which she continued a worthy and exemplary member until her decease. For some days before her death, it was evident to herself that her race was nearly run. She spoke frequently, and with great animation, of heaven and its glories. Her death, although sudden, was not so much unexpected as to induce alarm. Though she was rather unwell, she attended preaching as usual, on Thursday evening. On the night of the following Sabbath, she entered the eternal world. Was not this a brand plucked from the fire?"

In 1808, the Conference, by vote requested Mr. Benson to write a commentary on the Bible, and in compliance with such request he in the following year began the onerous task -- task for which he was well qualified, and in the accomplishment of which he at length succeeded, to the satisfaction of the Church. His "Commentary on the Old and New Testament," is an enduring monument of his piety, an extensive biblical knowledge, as well as of his general erudition.

In the year 1810, Mr. Benson had the misfortune to lose his beloved wife with whom he had lived and traveled for thirty years. This affliction bore heavily on his stricken mind, but although "cast down" by the dispensation of divine Providence, he was "not destroyed." Yet it was only by looking to the Lord, that he obtained support and consolation. During the same year in which his wife died, he was the second time elected President of the Conference, an evidence that his brethren appreciated his services in that capacity during his former term of office. The duties of this office, together with those of editor of the Magazine, and the task of writing his commentary, were duties sufficiently oppressive to break down the constitution of a more healthy man than Mr. Benson. One evening as he kneeled down to offer family prayers, he fell on his face like one dead.

His daughters lifted him up, when he gradually recovered his strength and consciousness. Thus did this good man spend his strength, for the good of the Church and the world.

While Mr. Benson was thus laboring for the good of mankind, he was frequently made the distributor of the alms of the benevolent. In 1812, an unknown friend sent twenty pounds (\$90) to be distributed among the poor, by Mr. Benson. One year after, the same friend gave him forty-five pounds for a similar purpose, and in another year he called on Mr. Benson, and left with him seventy pounds (over \$300) for the same object, adding as he gave it, "The more I give the Lord, he blesses me the more." Mr. Benson desired to have his name, but he declined making it known, thus practically carrying out the precept of Christ, "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."

Another instance of benevolence is recorded by Mr. Benson. In 1816 he preached in a neat Methodist chapel which had been lately erected in Cambridge, through the exertions of a Mr. Babcock. This person was a plasterer by trade, and on going to Cambridge to work at his trade, he found a small Methodist Society, having no place of worship. Resolving if possible to build one, he mentioned the subject to several pious friends, some of whom could not encourage the undertaking, and others who were willing to encourage and aid to a limited extent. Mr. Babcock however purchased a lot of ground, procured the materials, and proceeded with his own hands -- frequently without the help of any other laborer -- to lay the brick, plaster the inside, and slate the roof. His labor was given gratuitously, besides a handsome donation towards defraying the expenses of materials, &c. Such an instance of liberality on the part of a comparatively poor man, deserves to be recorded to his honor.

In 1818, Mr. Benson completed his Commentary on the Bible, which he had commenced eight years previously, and to finish which, and attend to his editorial, and other duties made it necessary for him to write day after day, from five o'clock in the morning until eleven at night, and this too, at the age of more than seventy years. Besides which, he generally preached twice or thrice on the Sabbath, and walked from eight to twelve miles with a body somewhat enfeebled by disease.

On the 26th day of November, 1820, Mr. Benson preached his last sermon. He had been growing more and more infirm for some time, although able to attend to his editorial duties. But his work was now nearly done, and the father in Israel was about to take his departure to the land of spirits. During his last sickness of ten weeks, he preserved the utmost composure of mind and conversed frequently and freely on the subject of death, asserting the utmost confidence in Christ, as an all-sufficient Saviour. A day or two before he died, he was visited by Dr. Clarke, and Rev. Jabez Bunting. The Doctor was very much affected at seeing him so much reduced, and said, "You know me, sir?" "O yes; it is Dr. Clarke." "Well, sir, you are not far from the kingdom of God." "I am not only not far from the kingdom of God, but I am sure of finding God in that kingdom," was the reply. He afterwards said to the Doctor, "I have no hope of being saved but by grace through faith," and to Mr. Bunting he remarked, "I have no sufficiency for anything good in myself," and on being asked if he now realized those truths he preached so often to others, he answered, "Yes O yes!"

On the 16th of February, 1821, Mr. Benson bade farewell to earth. He died without a struggle, or a groan, in the seventy-fourth year of his age, and the fiftieth of his ministry in the Methodist connection.

His remains were deposited in the burying-ground of City Road Chapel, London, on the 22d day of February, there to remain until the resurrection of the just. The corpse was preceded by four of the senior members of the Conference, and was followed by the relations, and by twenty-four traveling preachers, twenty lay gentlemen -- personal friends of the deceased -- thirty local preachers, twenty stewards, and forty other members of the Society, all of whom appeared in mourning cloaks, as the representatives of the bodies to which they respectively belonged, and who were deputed to honor the remains of the faithful but departed Benson. Mr. Bunting, as President of the Conference, conducted the funeral services, while Dr. Clarke delivered a funeral discourse to the thousands who were assembled together on the solemn occasion.

Thus died, and thus was buried, the Rev. Joseph Benson; a man who, although inferior to a few more talented ministers, was superior to many, yea, to the great mass of ministers, in point of talent, education, piety, usefulness, and diligence. His works still praise him. Not only was he the author of the Commentary on the Bible, but he wrote various works of other kinds, and among these, his excellent life of Mr. Fletcher will not only often be read, but be greatly admired, while his Commentary, as before stated, will be a lasting, living, speaking monument of his piety and erudition. "HE RESTS FROM HIS LABORS, AND HIS WORKS DO FOLLOW HIM."

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Part 2

JOSEPH BENSON

From hdm0699, "Centenary Cameos"

By Osie P. Fitzgerald

Destined to be a preacher and a scholar, his bent was irrepressible. He gravitated to Kings wood School, to Trevecca College, and to the pulpit, by the force of a tendency which was providential, not accidental. The adjustment of means to ends, of agents to the work to be done in the Church, is of God.

He was tenacious of his opinions, conservative in every fiber of his mental constitution. Wesleyan theology was accepted by him without any mental reservations, and he was disposed to insist that all others called by the Methodist name should do likewise. With regard to all questions of Church polity, he was content with what had worked well, and opposed all changes proposed with the hope of doing better.

Frail of body, he was mighty in intellect -- a living refutation of the fundamental assumption of materialism. His mental energy seemed almost inexhaustible, and he performed almost incredible labors. At midnight his study-lamp was burning, and at five in the morning it was relighted.

A studious youth and of a sedate and religious turn of mind, before he was ten years old he was in the habit of praying daily in secret. In his sixteenth year he felt consciously the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. He had come in contact with the Methodists, and he felt drawn to them by spiritual affinity. Believing that Methodism offered to him such a career of self-sacrificing service to Christ as his heart coveted, he went to London to meet and confer with Mr. Wesley. The great leader saw that this was no common youth, and took him to Kingswood and appointed him classical teacher. At Oxford he proposed to complete his studies; but his relations with Wesley and Lady Huntingdon caused him to be regarded with disfavor there., The Bishop of Worcester refused him ordination, and thus he was thrust out to do a work that was ready for his willing hands, and he went forth under a higher commission. Soon he received clearer light and fuller assurance. "The Lord," he writes, "scattered my doubts, and showed me more clearly the way of salvation by faith in Christ. I was not now anxious to know how I had resolved or not resolved. I had the Lord with me in all things; my soul rejoiced in his love, and I was continually expecting him to fulfill in me all his good pleasure." His life had been providentially drawn into its proper current; he knew and felt it to be so, and his thankful heart found a heaven on earth in the work to which he was called and to which he joyfully consecrated his life.

As a preacher he was richly and variously endowed. Possessing largely the critical faculty, he was exceptionally able as an expounder of the Holy Scriptures, while his declamatory powers were such as often made his awe-struck hearers feel as if the thunder-peals of the final judgment were breaking on their startled ears. He was a revivalist. Vast crowds flocked to hear him, to whom he preached with such power that they were moved to tears, and loud cries of anguish were wrung from the hearts of sinners pierced by the arrows of conviction. As in apostolic times, the word as preached by him had free course and was glorified; souls were converted while he was speaking, their darkness turned into light and their mourning into joy. His journeys were evangelical ovations, great companies of the people turning out to meet him and escorting him on his way.

The chapels being too small, he preached to the assembled thousands in the open air. At Gwennap ten thousand men and women stood before him at once, and under the divine afflatus he preached with such overwhelming effect that the saints wept for joy, and sinners wailed aloud in the agonies of penitential pain. In a single month he preached forty sermons to sixty thousand hearers. He was a master of assemblies, knowing the way to the consciences of men, and how to pour the oil of consolation into their troubled hearts. On one occasion, when thronged by a vast multitude eager to hear him, he requested all converted persons to retire to the outskirts of the crowd, so that the unconverted might approach him and hear the message of God. No one moved; they stood as if spell-bound. "What! all unconverted?" he exclaimed. Like an electric thrill, the keen conviction of sin ran through the multitude, and "conscience-stricken sinners fell as if slain by these three words."

His literary labors were abundant and useful. The work by which he is best known is his Biblical Commentary -- a work which shows the fruits of his extraordinary diligence and good judgment as a compiler, and a high order of ability as an exegete. It became a standard with the Wesleyan preachers, and still holds its place as a valuable contribution to Methodist literature. He was prolific in other lines of literary labor -- biography, polemics, and the editing of the Methodist Magazine and of books. The Greek Testament was his special study, and his accurate knowledge

of its contents, and his spiritual insight, made him a master in its exposition, a trustworthy guide to such as were disposed to dig deep that they might reach the hidden treasures in this mine of heavenly truth.

He died in 1821 in his seventy-third year, literally worn out in his Master's work. His dust sleeps in the City Road Chapel, London.

A slight, stooping figure plainly attired; a grave, thoughtful face; a well-shaped head, with a few scattering hairs above. the broad forehead; a voice feeble and unmusical, with a pulpit mannerism ungraceful yet singularly impressive -- Joseph Benson stands in his place, a master spirit among the mighty men who made Methodism what it is today; and his influence will be felt until the last chapter of Methodist history shall have been written amid the thick-coming wonders and glories of the final consummation.

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Part 3

A PARAGRAPH ABOUT JOSEPH BENSON

From hdm0720, the "Cyclopedia of Methodism" (B-Listings)

By Matthew Simpson

BENSON, Joseph, one of the most eminent Methodist ministers in England, was born at Melmerby, Jan. 25, 1748. His father designed him for a minister of the Church of England, and for this purpose he was taught Greek and Latin. At sixteen he came in contact with the Methodists and was converted. In 1766, Mr. Wesley appointed him classical master at his Kingswood school. He devoted himself closely to philosophy and theology. In 1769 he was appointed the chief instructor in Lady Huntingdon's Theological College, at Trevecca, Wales, but in 1771 he left it because of its becoming a thoroughly Calvinistic school. In August, 1771, he was admitted into the Methodist Conference, and soon became one of its ablest preachers. He filled the largest stations, and multitudes attended his ministry. Dr. Clarke calls him "a sound scholar, a powerful and able preacher, and a profound theologian." He was elected president of the Conferences of 1798 and 1810. In 1803 he was elected editor of the Methodist Magazine. His " Commentary on the Scriptures" is regarded by the Wesleyans as one of their standard works. He also wrote other valuable works. He died in great peace Feb. 16, 1821, at London.

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THE END