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JOHN WESLEY

AND THE

**Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century**





Rev. JOHN WESLEY

AND THE

Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century.

BY

JULIA WEDGWOOD.

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ROY WAIN  
CLAY  
WAIN

## PREFACE.

THE form in which it was originally designed that the following pages should appear, was one which excluded a frequent reference to authorities. The writer has endeavoured to remedy this defect by embodying them in the text, wherever this was practicable, and by the appended list of the principal books consulted. It will be obvious to an attentive reader that it was hardly possible to indicate all the sources of the impressions recorded in these pages, but few of any importance, it is believed, fail to bear with them the means of their own verification.

I cannot include in this list the work of the Rev. Thomas Jackson—by far the most interesting Methodist biography of the Wesleys—without a brief allusion to an interview with this venerable man, from which I derived a sense of the vitality of the system of religion represented by him, which the following record, being wholly occupied with the past, could not attempt to embody.

A note at the end of the volume discusses a point on which the view here taken differs from that of

## PREFACE.

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Wesley's Methodist biographers. It seemed worth while to go into the evidence for this view, because it must be always with hesitation that any one differs from those who have made the object of dissent their special study.

The book is not to be regarded as a biography. It is an attempt to delineate the influence of a particular man upon his age. Hence the background to the central figure is treated with an attention which will seem out of proportion to the slightness of the whole sketch, unless it is constantly borne in mind that the object of representation is not the vicissitude of a particular life, but that element in the life which impressed itself on the life of a nation,—an element which cannot be understood without a study of aspects of national thought which on a superficial view might appear wholly unconnected with it.

### LIST OF ERRATA.

Page 146, last line, and page 147, top line omit 'this writer (whose name is not mentioned, and who possibly might be.)'

Page 340, line 5, for 'Grimley' read 'Grumley.'

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JOHN WESLEY.



# JOHN WESLEY,

AND THE

RELIGIOUS REVIVAL OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

THERE are probably few names familiar to all Englishmen which have gathered round them associations so misleading as those which surround John Wesley. For those who take their impressions from hearsay, it is no more than a symbol for the religion of the illiterate. Others, to whom it is familiar through cursory mentions in the literature of the day, recall, on hearing a name coupled with Richelieu by Lord Macaulay, and with Luther by Mr. Buckle, vague notions of able ecclesiastical organization and controversial zeal. Neither view (if the following delineation be correct) can be accepted without large modification. Wesley reached the age of thirty-six without any exclusive devotion to the religious teaching of a particular class; his organizing power, great as it was, does not exhibit his character on its strongest side, while his advocacy of particular doctrines brings forward his weakest.

Perhaps the founder of a sect is specially liable to misconception. The true representatives of a reformer are never those who call themselves by his name: what is remarkable in him is that he breaks through conventional barriers, what is remarkable in them is that they take the beaten track; and it is necessary, in order to understand him, to connect him with his cotemporaries rather than with his followers. This is the attempt made in the following pages. They aim at delineating John Wesley so far as he formed the centre to a great religious revival; and regarded from this point of view it will be found that, though he exhibited great powers of rule, they were very far indeed from being the most remarkable thing about him.

What, then, was the central fact in his character? It was that which is the common property of all who inspire new force into the religious life of a nation; it was the conviction, which when barely stated sounds a truism, that God governs *this* world, and not only that which lies beyond the grave. 'Who disputes it?' we are inclined to ask now. The reader who will peruse these pages will probably confess that in the eighteenth century it was disputed by all who filled the chief offices of the Church of England. They believed, more or less firmly, that after death we were to pass into a region under the direct government of God, and they believed that on the whole what we had done here would settle our position there; but the assertion that we were living in a world of spiritual laws *now* seemed to them not only untrue, but impious. They thought that the direct action of God on man was a peculiarity of the period recorded in the Scriptures;

and that to seek to discover any continuity of that action in their own time was (the words are not too strong) a kind of blasphemy.

Whenever, among a generation which denies this fact, a man arises who asserts it, he will always have power to organize and mould a society. For what men need, and especially what the sufferers of the world need, is to believe in this Divine government; and any one who has the power to inspire this belief has the one lever which can move their souls. The revival with which Wesley's name is here associated was not the work of any one man. We are obliged in any historical review to exaggerate what is typical, and to remember as the act of one what was in reality the aspiration and endeavour of many. The clergy of that day made it their aim to ward off all attacks from a particular system of doctrine and organization, and to keep a particular set of ideas in an atmosphere of profound calm. There were others who perceived that what was thus guarded was a corpse, and that the very devotion to the departed spirit demanded attention to be transferred to its representatives elsewhere. This perception found many and various exponents, but its best type is in John Wesley.

He was born in June 17, 1703, at Epworth, a market-town in that portion of the county of Lincolnshire known as the Isle of Axholme, a strip of land lying west of the Trent, and enclosed between that river and the old channels of three others, now only to be traced by the willow-trees formerly edging their banks, which before 1628 covered the adjacent country with their overflowings. The land was then drained by a Dutchman, Cornelius Vermuyden, to

whom a third of it was granted; he sold shares to his countrymen, and some of them left Holland and settled on their allotments. The Fenmen, however, were opposed to the drainage, and refused to receive compensation for their right of pasturage on the redeemed land. Hence arose fierce riots and angry litigation, lasting for more than half a century, in which the pre-eminence in ferocity must be assigned to the Fenmen. They burnt the crops of their opponents, killed their cattle, and sometimes their workmen, laid the whole level under water in the hopes of drowning the inhabitants, and at last attempted to burn the house of the most obnoxious of their opponents, Nathaniel Reading, with all its inhabitants, the doors having been locked, and the keyholes stopped up with clay. This last atrocity was perpetrated in the year 1697, only six years before Wesley's birth, and at no great distance from his native town. This wild race did not need any provocation to regard the intruders with ill-will. The historian of this part of the country (Rev. W. B. Stonehouse), after quoting an old description of the Girvii, or Fenmen, as noted from the Saxon times for 'a race of men, according to the place where they dwell, rude, uncivil, and envious to all others,' adds that 'persons acquainted with the Fenmen thirty or forty years ago will readily admit that they were the descendants of the ancient Girvii.'<sup>1</sup>

Among such a population John Wesley passed the earliest years of his life, and his first recollection was one which connected itself with their barbarity. One winter night in 1709, the little fellow on waking up found the room so light that his first impression was.

<sup>1</sup> Stonehouse's *Isle of Axholme*, 1839.

that daylight had returned, and he called to his nurse to take him up. Having no answer, he put his head out of the curtains, saw the flames above his head, and rushed terrified to the door; but the fire was there, and he climbed up to the window, showing himself to the terror-stricken gazers in the yard below. The sudden cry for a ladder, the terrible response, 'There will not be time,' the improvised substitute of one man raised on the shoulders of another, and then the awful crash of the falling roof as the child felt the welcome arms clasp him, all remained fixed in Wesley's memory with that distinctness which, when associated with strong emotion, gives the event thus stamped upon the mind a significance which nothing in after-life can rival. The roof fell in at the very moment that the child was lifted to the ground, for he says it would have crushed him and his preserver had it not fallen inward. We can easily believe that that sense of personal guidance which Wesley could only recognize as providential interference with the course of nature took its rise from the moment when the boy, still quivering with the terror of that escape, heard his father cry, 'Come, neighbours, let us kneel down; let us give thanks to God: He has given me all my eight children. Let the house go, I am rich enough.' The deliverance was commemorated, under one of Wesley's portraits, by a vignette of a burning house, with the legend, 'Is not this a brand snatched from the burning?' and by Wesley's choice of these words for his epitaph, when he believed himself dying, in his fiftieth year. To his mature imagination all mankind was typified in his own remembered peril—peril only the greater from their



unconsciousness of it; his work was to imitate his own deliverer, and snatch slumbering souls from a world that was soon to sink in the flames of hell. This fire, as well as one in the year before Wesley's birth, was supposed to be the work of an enemy. The timber house, with its thatched roof, was indeed an easy prey to any accidental spark, but the character of the people by whom the Wesleys were surrounded was such as to favour the suspicion of incendiarism.

Few men of piety and zeal, probably, were ever less fitted to minister among a race such as is here described than the father of John Wesley. He seems, indeed, to have discharged his pastoral duties conscientiously, according to his ideal, but this ideal was not one to be carried out with happy results among a set of barbarians ready to burn their enemies alive, nor could it receive the undivided attention of one occupied with voluminous writings, the cares of a large family, and the pecuniary embarrassments which were owing equally to his bad management and his kind heart. The son of a Nonconformist father and grandfather, both of whom were ejected from their livings by the Act of Uniformity in 1662, he returned to the Church with something of the reactionary vehemence of a convert, and was through life an unflinching advocate of the powers that be. His father, John Wesley, seems to have had more resemblance to his great namesake and grandson. A conversation is preserved for us in Calamy's 'Nonconformists' Memorial,' which with alterations, mainly of dialect, might pass for one of those which took place nearly a century later between the grandson of one speaker and the successors of the other. Dr. Ironside, Bishop

of Bristol, had sent for this John Wesley about 1661, and taxed him with belonging to a 'factious and heretical Church,' and preaching without an ordination. 'What does your Lordship mean by an ordination?' asked Wesley. 'If you mean that ordination spoken of in Rom. x., I had that.' 'You must have a mission according to law, and the order of the Church of England,' argued the Bishop. 'I am not satisfied in my spirit therein,' replied Wesley. This expression seems to have been offensive; the Bishop exclaimed impatiently, 'Yqu have more new-coined phrases than ever we have heard of! You mean your conscience.' 'Spirit is no new phrase,' replied Wesley. 'We read of being sanctified in body, soul, and spirit; but if your lordship like it not so, then I say I am not satisfied in my conscience touching the ordination you speak of.' And in reply to further urgency from the Bishop, who does not seem to have been a very formidable antagonist, he asserts himself to be called to the work, though not to the office, of the ministry. To any one who reads the account of the conversation with the Methodist history in his mind, it has the air of an anachronism, and is one of many indications afforded us by Wesley's life how numerous and far-reaching are the fibres by which the life of the present draws nourishment from the life of the past.

His son Samuel was educated among the Dissenters, and seems to have attracted some attention among them, for in 1683, at the age of only twenty-one, he was chosen to answer some severe invectives against the body of Nonconformists; the course of reading thus originated producing the effect exactly

opposite to that with which it was undertaken, and leading him to join the Church. He was a good man, and a tolerably successful writer of verse; but his history is only interesting where it catches the reflected gleam of more illustrious natures. We may perhaps fit him into a blank in the 'Dunciad;' he has the honour of being slain by Homer, in Swift's 'Battle of the Books;' and Pope writes to Swift in his favour. He was chaplain to Lord Normanby, a man of some mark, who wrote bad verses, and was extravagantly complimented for them by Dryden and Pope; and the following extract from the 'Athenian Oracle,' a kind of 'Notes and Queries' of that day, to which Wesley was a frequent contributor, evidently contains the picture of his position there. The writer is a 'chaplain in a certain family, which was not so regular' as he could wish. 'I am forced,' he goes on, 'to see misses, drinking, gaming, &c. and dare not open my mouth against them, supposing from the little notice that is taken of me in matters of religion, and the great distance my patron keeps, that, if I should pretend to blame anything of that nature, it would occasion nothing but the turning me out of the family. . . . Therefore, gentlemen, my humble request is to know of you what I ought to do, neither to betray the cause of religion nor give offence. I would gladly be satisfied how far a chaplain is obliged to take care of the morals of the people he lives in. Your answer may be of use to a great many besides myself, for my position is far from singular. I cannot believe that to say grace and read prayers now and then when my patron is at leisure is all the duty of a chaplain, yet I find we all

think we have done enough when we have done that.'<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Wesley's wife Susannah is entitled to a more conspicuous position in a sketch of her son's career. Her influence upon him was strong, and her resemblance to him remarkable; his logical intellect and fearless honesty are recalled by all her letters, and she seems, like him, to have been wanting in tenderness and in a sense of humour. The latter want is displayed in a letter of hers informing her son Samuel that she has been drawing up an account of her leaving the Dissenters (among whom her father, Dr. Annesley, was a distinguished preacher) at *thirteen*, giving 'the main of the controversy between them and the Church as far as it had then come to her knowledge.' Some sternness of character is evident in the following extract from a letter to the same son. 'I am much better pleased with the beginning of your letter than with what you used to send me,' she tells him; 'for I do not love distance or ceremony; there is more love and tenderness in the name of *mother* than in all the complimentary titles of the world;' and some time after the fire we find him writing to her to know if she had lost a child in the

<sup>1</sup> A story has been often repeated, which, if correct, would entitle Samuel Wesley to a more dignified position than that here accorded him. It is said that at the time when the famous Declaration of Indulgence—a suspension of all laws against the free exercise of religion, intended to bring back that of the Roman Catholics—was ordered by James II. to be read in all the churches, liberal and ineffectual offers were made to Samuel Wesley, then a youth of twenty-six, to induce him to support the Government. The latest historian of the Wesley family (L. Tyerman), to whose work the writer is much indebted, reluctantly disposes of this story by the fact that Wesley was not in orders when it is said to have occurred.

flames ; a strange indication of the reserve which he supposed possible in his mother. However, her system of education impressed her children with so much admiration that we find a letter to her son John, giving him, at his own request, an elaborate account which, though copied in full by his best-known biographer, seems comprised in the statement that she was a strict, devoted, and methodical parent, according to the ideas of that day. 'In order to form the minds of children,' she tells her son, 'the first thing to be done is to conquer their will.' This difficulty was overcome so effectually with the little Wesleys that 'when any of them were ill there was no difficulty in making them take the most unpleasant medicine,' a triumph which comes vividly home to one's imagination ! Some chapters of this Wesleyan code sound rather stern, and others rather stilted. 'When turned a year old they were taught to fear the rod, and to cry softly,' she tells her son ; by which means, 'that most odious noise, the crying of children, was rarely heard in the house ;' while 'none of the children were permitted to call each other by their proper names, without the addition of "brother" or "sister."' Other portions, however, reveal glimpses of a large motherly nature : 'When the will of a child is subdued,' she says, 'many childish follies and inadvertences may be passed by.' We see in her punctual, orderly rule a distinct germ of the whole Methodist discipline, with all of its excellences and only some of its faults. No men can have owed more to their mother than John and Charles Wesley and she was beloved and revered by them, as she deserved to be. John speaks of a chance of seeing

her unexpectedly in 1724 with a unique burst of eagerness, dreads in early youth to survive her, and many years afterwards gave it as one of the causes which had deterred him from matrimony, that he never could expect to see any woman who equalled his mother. Nor was it only partial affection which found something singularly admirable in her character. Dunton's 'Life and Errors,' a well-known book among those who care for pictures of the past, written by an eccentric bookseller who married her sister, contains a copy of verses on the 'Summer Friend,' informing us, in singularly infelicitous rhyme, that,

'When I was rich, I was the best of men ;  
'Twas then proclaimed (so high my praises ran),  
Oh what a blessing is our brother John !  
But when my fortune did begin to wane,  
But two of all my summer friends remain.'

A note informs us that these two are 'Sister Wesley and S. S——y.' Dunton was an unreasonable and quarrelsome man, much in debt to Wesley, who seems to have treated him with great forbearance ; and this testimony to his sister-in-law is no small evidence of her magnanimity—an evidence which only bears out all other indications remaining to us of her large and strong character.

Perhaps her prejudices were also strong. Her refusal to say Amen to her husband's prayer for King William, whom she believed to be still only Prince of Orange, once occasioned a temporary separation between the two. In spite of a glowing eulogium passed upon her in her husband's 'Life of Christ,' hers was not, apparently, a very happy marriage. 'Would to God,' her eldest son Samuel writes to

John in 1727, 'my father and mother were as easy in one another as my wife and I are;' and she writes to John at Oxford, 'Tis a misfortune almost peculiar to our family, that your father and I seldom think alike.' Some interesting letters to her husband illustrate this. During his absence at Convocation, the meeting for family prayers had expanded, without any effort of hers, till on Sundays a congregation of about two hundred gathered round her, all present at their own request. Though these meetings were not held during service time, their numbers roused the jealousy of the curate, and he complained to the absent rector of these irregular proceedings, which he persuaded him to discourage. The answer of his wife might have been written by John Wesley. 'I thank you for dealing so plainly and faithfully with me in a matter of uncommon concern,' she tells her husband, in language more like that of a candid friend than an affectionate wife: 'the main of your objections against our Sunday evening meetings are, first, that it will look particular; second, my sex; and lastly, your being at present in a public station and character; to all which I shall answer briefly. As to its looking particular, I grant it does, and so does almost everything that is serious, or that may in any way advance the glory of God, or the salvation of souls, if it be performed out of a pulpit or in the way of common conversation, because in our corrupt age the utmost care and diligence has been used to banish all discourse of God or spiritual concerns out of society, as if religion were never to appear out of the closet, and we were to be ashamed of nothing so much as professing ourselves to be Christians. To

your second, I reply that as I am a woman, so I am also a mistress of a large family. And though the superior charge of the souls contained in it lie upon you as head of the family, yet in your absence I cannot but look upon every soul you leave under my care as a talent committed to me under a trust by the great Lord of all the families of heaven and earth; and if I am unfaithful to Him or you in neglecting to improve these talents, how shall I answer unto Him when He shall command me to render an account of my 'stewardship? But I never durst positively presume to hope that God would make use of me as an instrument in doing good; the farthest I ever durst go was, It may be, who can tell? With God all things are possible; I will resign myself to Him. Or, as Herbert better expresses it,—

'Only, since God doth often make  
Of lowly matter for high uses meet,  
I throw me at His feet.  
There will I lie, until my Maker seek  
For some mean stuff, whereon to show His skill,  
This is my time.'

And thus I rested, without passing any reflection on myself, or forming any judgment about the success or event of this undertaking.

'Your third objection I leave to be answered by your own judgment. . . . Why any should reflect upon you, let your station be what it will, because your wife endeavours to draw people to church, and to restrain them, by reading and other persuasions, from their profanation of God's most holy day, I cannot conceive. But if any should be so mad as to do it, I wish you would not regard it. For my



part, I value no censure on this account ; I have long since shaken hands with the world, and I heartily wish I had never given them more reason to speak against me.'

The effect of this letter was counteracted by one written at the same time by the curate, who did his best to revive those bitter and long-lived animosities which only fifty years previously had produced the persecuting acts of Charles the Second's reign, filled the gaols with Dissenters, and made the name of 'conventicle,' which he applied to Mrs. Wesley's gatherings, the war-cry of intolerance and bigotry. Samuel Wesley must have well remembered the misery of those days. His father and grandfather had both been driven from their homes by those persecuting edicts : one of them had been brought to an early grave by these sufferings ; and his mother still living and dependent upon him would be a perpetual memorial to him of the dangers of any provocation to ecclesiastical authority. It was not surprising that the timid nature was alarmed. He wrote again to his wife repeating his dissuasions, and adding the not very wise suggestion that one of her uneducated congregation should read the service. She replied that the audience would be little edified by hearing a sermon spelt letter by letter, and urged more confidently the actual good that these meetings had effected. So far from their having drawn people away from church, she informed her husband that they had increased the congregation from about twenty-five to about 250, and dwells on the harm that will be done by breaking up the meetings, suggesting, with no less prudence than magnanimity, that the

curate whose objections led to their disuse would be the principal sufferer in the affections of the people. 'I can now keep them to the church, but, if our meeting be laid aside, I doubt they will never go to hear him more.' These arguments, or others of similar import, prevailed, and the meetings which thus continued formed an important event in the life of the Wesleys. In their earliest years, John (about eight) and Charles (about four) were accustomed to see a collection of rough, brutal peasants, who never entered the church door, listen with reverence and attention to their mother's teaching; as they grew older they learnt that in these efforts the ministers of the Church had done their best to oppose and thwart her, and that she had been censured as 'precise and hypocritical' for the attempt to bring the message of the Gospel to those who filled in the Lincolnshire village the place of the publicans and sinners of Jerusalem.

Of course the children of such a mother were not left without special religious instruction; one evening in the week was appointed by her for religious conversation with each of them. 'On Thursday,' she wrote to her husband, 'I talk with Jacky, and on Saturday with Charles;' and doubtless those weekly confessions (such in effect must always be interviews with this object between mother and child) remained in Wesley's mind as the ideal upon which his class-meetings were afterwards framed. But that premature awakening to the realities of the invisible world, so familiar to us in most religious biographies, is entirely wanting, and we leave his childhood at Epworth and his school-life at the Charterhouse

behind us without coming upon a single anecdote of early piety. Before proceeding to the account of his Oxford career, however, we have to notice an incident of his early life, perhaps more important in its influence on his character because he only heard of it. His home, during his school-days, was the scene of some disturbances which have never been satisfactorily explained.

The winter of 1716 was the period at which these unaccountable noises were first taken notice of, but they were not then heard for the first time. Some years previously, Mrs. Wesley, sitting in her own room, suddenly heard a succession of loud knocks, three and three, and at the same time perceived that the doors and windows rattled violently, the only remarkable fact about this little preliminary uproar being that she remembered it with sufficient distinctness to connect it with the disturbances of some years later. On the 1st of December, 1716, the maid, who had lately come into the service of the Wesleys, heard, as she thought, some one groaning in the hall, near the dining-room door. On reaching the spot, however, she found no one, and rushed into the room, where several of the young ladies were sitting, to tell them what she had heard. They treated the matter with ridicule, but soon afterwards the laughers were themselves frightened by a similar cause; and after about a fortnight of continued alarm, and futile search for its cause, the girls appealed to their mother, who seems to have regarded the disturbances with a curious mixture of annoyance, awe, and incredulity. They represented to her mind alternately the work of rats and an announcement of the death of her eldest

son, who had been some time without writing. Her naturalistic theory was regarded by her daughters as savouring of infidelity, and their fears that the measures taken to banish the intruder would only irritate him were justified by the fact that after a horn was blown to frighten away the rats, the disturbances, previously confined to the night, were now continued impartially throughout the hours of light and darkness. They were of various characters. Besides the continual knocking, we hear that sometimes a great chain seemed to fall clanking on the floor, at other times the startled inmates heard the crash of breaking crockery, the jingling of money, the breaking of some hard substance like coal, the gobbling of a turkey cock, and the dragging, heavy tread of some heavily-draped figure. At last, in the general distress, Mr. Wesley was told of the strange noises, which he was the last to hear, and for which he accounted in a way that strangely illustrates the character of the time, for the girls perceived, by his care to see them safe into their rooms, that he imputed the disturbances to some tricks between them and their lovers. Their natural anxiety that he should be forced to hear and investigate the unaccountable noises himself was soon gratified. Shortly afterwards he was awakened by nine distinct knocks, which seemed in the next room, close to his bed, the knocks being as usual separated into groups of three. He rose, and went into the apartment from which the knocks came, but found it empty; and from this time he heard the noises constantly. After being much plagued by the senseless but harmless tricks of the invisible goblin, he tried to find an exorcist in a

neighbouring clergyman, a Mr. Hoole. Mr. Wesley informed his guest on his arrival that he had 'sent for him to conjure;' and this information being explained, the day was spent in vain expectation of hearing the mysterious noises. Soon after ten at night, a maid came to tell the company in the parlour that 'Jeffery,' as the unseen visitor was now called, after an old man who had died in the house, was at his tricks. They hurried upstairs, and heard all the usual performances, after which Wesley, observing that his children trembled violently in their sleep, seized a pistol, and, but for the dissuasion of his guest, would have fired in the direction from which the noises came. 'Sir,' said Mr. Hoole, 'you are convinced this is something preternatural; if so, your attack cannot hurt it, and may give it power to hurt you.' The next step, Mr. Wesley's asking the unseen knocker why he disturbed innocent children, and did not come to him if he had anything to say, would on this theory be also dangerous. The goblin accepted the invitation, and began rapping in his study from that time, besides once or twice giving him a hearty push. Several others of the family experienced a similar exercise of force, and once the bed was lifted with one of the girls seated upon it, and this was at a time when familiarity had so far worn off all the awe in the minds of the young people, that she laughingly wondered if Old Jeffery meant to carry her off; and another time Mr. Wesley's plate began to twirl violently upon the table, and continued till some of the party took hold of it, when it ceased its gambols. At last they became to the younger members of the family a mere object of amusement

and little Kezzy, a child of six years old, declared that hunting Old Jeffery from room to room was the best game in the world. These phenomena were chiefly confined to the region of sound, but Mrs. Wesley once, and the man-servant twice, thought they saw something like a badger or rabbit run rapidly by them. It is a curious indication of the arbitrary line by which we limit the region of the credible, that there is in more than one writer on the subject a willingness to treat the audible phenomena as real, while the visible are set down at once as fancy.

To account for this and similar stories, three alternatives may be proposed,—the hypothesis that all concerned were telling lies will not be put forth by any one. The noises were the result either of mere fancy on the part of the hearers, of a trick of their servants and neighbours, or of some agency associated with that system which has acquired the inappropriate name of 'Spiritualism.' It is easier to point out the difficulties in all these theories than to make a choice between them. It is almost as difficult to imagine a dozen persons, not otherwise insane, fancying they heard knockings and clankings, as it is to conceive of some machinery being introduced to a small newly-built house, inhabited by a large family, which could be completely concealed there, and should produce these effects which the family often tried in vain to imitate. It has been suggested that Mr. Wesley's first suspicion about the cause of the disturbances was not altogether wrong; and Mehetabel Wesley, with a hypothetical admirer, is accredited with their authorship. She appears to

have been in a peculiar manner connected with the noises. 'My sister Hetty, I find, was particularly troubled,' says Samuel, in a letter requesting more information. 'It never followed me as it did Hetty,' says Emily in her answer. Once immediately after the noise Mr. Wesley jumped up and called Hetty, 'who alone was up in the house.' 'Sister Hetty trembled strongly in her sleep while it knocked,' says Susannah. The signal always noticed as the preliminary of these noises—a sound like the winding-up of a jack—certainly suggests some kind of trick with machinery, as does also the fact that the wind rose at the same time, and whistled round the house. Hetty was a clever, sentimental girl, and, from a rather abject letter to her father, we should imagine somewhat artful; but we have no real evidence in support of this theory, and if it be adopted many of the circumstances above mentioned must be set aside as mere fancy. This balance of conflicting improbabilities must be left to adjust themselves according to the reader's estimate. The subject is too large a one to admit of discussion here. The question as to the degree in which nervous imaginations may modify and suggest external sights and sounds so as virtually to transport the observer into the region of the supernatural, has never been investigated. There is a large body of authenticated phenomena which must admit of this explanation, or some other common to the whole, and it is sufficient for a biographer of Wesley, having related these incidents, to be satisfied with noting their effect on his character. Without exaggerating the importance of events which took place when he was a schoolboy,

we must believe that the state of mind in his family, which these events both indicated and strengthened, must have been potent to create in him that demand for the marvellous which is so apt to fulfil itself. On some minds, no doubt, the effect would have been exactly opposite. The whole disturbance was so objectless, so like some senseless game of a child, that if any inference at all were to be drawn from it, it would be rather to dissociate all violent external manifestations from spiritual conditions; and it does not seem impossible that the dislike shown by Charles Wesley in after-life to the convulsions and hysterics which his brother hailed as signs of the new birth, was connected with his childish recollections of aimless fright under the persecutions of Old Jeffery. It was at all events different with John. The very fact that he was not a personal witness to the phenomena may have deepened their effect upon him. The account drawn up by him on his visit home, before going to Oxford, betrays several little touches of unconscious distortion, which shows us an imagination not entirely passive. The kind of effect on his mind is illustrated by that which it had on his sister Emily, who announces herself, with the *naïve* decision of eighteen, as 'inclined to infidelity' at the time of these noises, and by them reclaimed to a belief in the spiritual world. Thirty-four years later, when that belief must have been driven, by many trials and sorrows, to find a deeper source than a series of odd noises, she writes thus to her brother John: 'I want sadly to see you, and talk some hours with you, as in times past. One doctrine of yours and of many more—namely, that no happi-



ness can be found in any or all things in the world,—that, as I have sixteen years of my own experience which lie flatly against it, I want to talk to you about. Another thing is that wonderful thing called by us Jeffery. You won't laugh at me for being superstitious if I tell you how certainly that *something* calls on me against any extraordinary new affliction; but so little is known of the invisible world that I, at least, am not able to judge whether it be a friendly or an evil spirit.'

The circumstances of the Wesleys' childhood connect themselves in a strikingly transparent manner with the work they were called to do in the world. Among the wild Fenmen they must have grown up accustomed to all that brutality which, in later years, they were called upon to confront and rebuke, while the labours of their zealous and earnest father must have stood before them as a type of what the Church organization of that day could and could not accomplish to Christianize such a people; the more effectual labours of their mother, in whom their love and reverence centred, was an encouragement to higher aspirations, and a sanction to their endeavour to pour into other channels that energy which in the old ones so often ran to waste. A series of unexplained phenomena, lastly, uninteresting and meaningless as they were, furnished the mind of the elder brother with a stock of recollections firmly rooted in the supernatural which justified his freely adding to their number any analogous instances of superhuman agency without investigation.

## CHAPTER II.

### WESLEY AT OXFORD.

THE period during which Wesley was entered at Christ Church, Oxford, may be regarded as the lowest point in the history of that University. The half-heartedness, the lawlessness, and the irreverence which were the sins of Hanoverian England, came to a focus at the great nursery of English political life, where youth was surrounded by temptations to evil without any guidance or encouragement in resisting it. The sententious and epigrammatic style of Gibbon has preserved in the nameless portraiture of one of his tutors—who 'remembered that he had a salary to receive, and forgot that he had a duty to perform'—what there is plenty of reason for regarding as an average specimen of a class intended to supply this guidance and encouragement. The more favourable sketch which precedes it perhaps suggests even more forcibly the low ebb of efficiency to which a class of public teachers were reduced, when 'one of the best of the tribe' is described as follows. Dr. Waldegrave, says Gibbon, writing of his first tutor in the year 1752, when he had not quite completed his fifteenth year, 'was satisfied, like his fellows, with the slight and superficial discharge of an important trust. As soon

as he had sounded the insufficiency of his disciple in school-learning, he proposed that we should read every morning from ten to eleven the comedies of Terence. The sum of my improvement in the University of Oxford is confined to three or four Latin plays; and even the study of an elegant classic, which might have been illustrated by a comparison of ancient and modern theatres, was reduced to a dry and literal interpretation of the author's text. During the first weeks I constantly attended these lessons in my tutor's room, but, as they appeared to be equally devoid of profit and pleasure, I was once tempted to try the experiment of a formal apology. The apology was accepted with a smile. I repeated the offence with less ceremony; by degrees the slightest motive of laziness or indisposition was allowed as a worthy impediment, nor did my tutor appear conscious of my absence or neglect. Had the hour of lecture been constantly filled, a single hour was a small portion of my academic leisure. No plan of study was recommended to my use, no exercises were prescribed for his inspection; and, at the most precious season of youth, whole days and weeks were suffered to elapse without labour or amusement, without advice or account.'

So little did the tutorial supervision avail when it might have been exercised for good. Its influence for evil, if we might judge from the squibs of the day, was more active, and, largely as we should allow for the exaggeration of such literature, we cannot but conclude that deep drinking was as likely to be the result of their guardianship as profound learning. While such supervision as this

was the sole restraint exercised by the University upon the youths committed to her care, we can hardly wonder that the time spent at Oxford was, to a man like Gibbon, 'the most idle and unprofitable period of his life.' Even under the very different system which prevailed in the early portion of the present century, one of the most fertile thinkers of our day has been heard to speak of his University career as the only completely idle interval of his life; how often it may have proved not a mere episode, but the foundation of a life of idleness, no human being can tell. Nor was the evil merely negative. While the student lounged away his time in the coffee-house and the tavern, whilst the dice-box supplied him with a serious pursuit, and the bottle a relaxation, he was called upon at every successive step to his degree to take a solemn oath of observance of the academical statutes which his behaviour infringed in every particular. While the public professors received £100 or £200 a year for giving no lectures, the candidates for degrees were obliged to ask and pay for a dispensation for not having attended the lectures that never were given. The system in every public declaration solemnly recognized and accepted was in every private action utterly defied. Whatever the Oxford graduate omitted to learn, he would not fail to acquire a ready facility in subscribing, with solemn attestations, professions which he violated without hesitation or regret. The Thirty-nine Articles were signed on matriculation, without any attempt to understand them. 'Our venerable mother,' says the great historian from whom we have already quoted, 'had contrived to unite the opposite extremes of

bigotry and indifference;’ and these blended influences, which led Gibbon first to Rome, and then to scepticism, proved no doubt to the average mind a mere narcotic to all spiritual life. Gibbon is not the only great writer who has recorded his testimony against Hanoverian Oxford. Adam Smith—in that work which has been called,<sup>1</sup> with great but pardonable exaggeration, ‘the most important book that ever was written,’ the ‘Wealth of Nations’—has, in the following remarks on Universities, evidently incorporated his anything but loving recollections of the seven years (1740-47) which he spent at Balliol. ‘In the University of Oxford the greater part of the professors have for these many years given up even the pretence of teaching. The discipline is in general contrived not for the benefit of the students, but for the interest, or, more properly speaking, for the ease, of the masters. In England, the public schools are less corrupted than the Universities; the youth there are, or at least may be, taught Greek and Latin, which is everything the masters pretend to teach. In the University the youth neither are, nor can be, taught the sciences *which it is the business of those incorporated bodies to teach.*’ It is the last statement to which attention is here directed. It is not that the University drew up a bad programme, not even that this scheme was badly carried out. That might be the case also; but the radical vice of the system was, not that it was essentially incomplete in theory or faulty in practice, but that it was false. Its worst result was not poor scholars, but insincere and venal men.

<sup>1</sup> In Buckle’s “History of Civilization.”

These testimonies are, it may be said, attacks from an enemy. Let us hear the admissions of a friend. To find one, however, we must descend from the rank of permanently memorable names to that more numerous throng where a past notoriety affords, and a present oblivion needs, a word of biographical notice in connection with any quotation or mention. Dr. Vicesimus Knox (1752—1821), head-master of Tunbridge School, and a once popular writer in that school of which Addison is the model, wrote in 1781 a treatise on Liberal Education which went through many editions. A desire to represent the University in its most pleasing aspect is evident in every line. Yet in the passage in which Dr. Knox evidently desires to combat the impression that Scotland or Germany might rival England in her Universities, he enumerates her advantages in the following terms : ‘I believe Europe cannot produce parallels to Oxford and Cambridge in opulence, buildings, libraries, professorships, scholarships, and all the external dignity and mechanical apparatus of learning. If there is an inferiority, *it is in the persons*, not in the places or their constitution. And here I cannot help confessing that a desire to please the great, and bring them to the Universities, causes a compliance with fashionable manners, a relaxation of discipline, and a connivance at ignorance and folly,’ which errors he confesses occasioned ‘the English Universities to be in less repute than they were formerly.’ The fashion of sending young men thither was even in some degree abated among that class who at the present day would be the most reluctant to omit it—the nobility. The useless and frivolous exercises re-

quired for the attainment of academic honours, and the relaxation of discipline, had by this time created a wide-spread and deeply-felt contempt for the whole system of which they formed a part; and the indulgent but candid observer, who tries to dilute his censure with the truism that he could not have been placed anywhere in this sublunary world without discovering many evils, informs us that in his eight years' residence at the University 'he saw immorality, habitual drunkenness, idleness, ignorance, and vanity openly and boastfully obtruding themselves on public view, and triumphing without control over the timidity of modest merit.' Even in this sublunary world, we may hope, this is not an inevitable state of things in an institution for the education of youth.

The condition of Oxford at the time of the rise of Methodism has been too little noted among those who have studied the great Evangelical revival. Contemplating this important movement in its latter stage, they have forgotten that it took its rise in the attempt made by an Oxford tutor to bring back to the national institution for education something of that *method* which was at this time so disgracefully neglected. To surround a young man with illustrations of one kind of error is the inevitable preparation for making him a vehement partisan of its opposite, and in education the influence on which we can reckon most certainly is that of reaction. The hard external code and needless restrictions of Methodism should be regarded with reference to what Wesley saw in the years he spent in that abode of talent undirected and folly unrestrained.

It was to the Oxford here described—the Oxford

where Gibbon and Adam Smith wasted the best years of their life, and many of their unremembered cotemporaries followed in their steps with issues not less disastrous to themselves, however unimportant to others,—to the Oxford where young men swore to observe laws they never read, and renewed the solemn promise when they had discovered the impossibility of keeping it,—that Wesley, about a score of years after his entrance on the University, poured forth from the pulpit of St. Mary's such burning words as must have reached many a conscience in the congregation below. 'Let me ask you,' he said in his University Sermon for 1744, 'in tender love and in the spirit of meekness, Is this a Christian city? Are we, considered as a community of men, so filled with the Holy Ghost as to enjoy in our hearts, and show forth in our lives, the genuine fruits of that Spirit? I entreat you to observe that here are no peculiar notions now under consideration: that the question moved is not concerning doubtful opinions, but concerning the undoubted fundamental branches (if there be any such) of our common Christianity. And for the decision thereof, I appeal unto your own consciences. In the presence of the great God, before whom both you and I shall shortly appear, I pray you that are in authority over us, whom I reverence for your office' sake, to consider (and that not after the manner of dissemblers with God), are you lively portraitures of Him whom ye are appointed to represent among men? Do you put forth all your strength in the vast work you have undertaken? Let it not be said that I speak here as if all under your care were intended to be clergymen.



Not so: I speak only as if they were intended to be Christians. But what example is set us by those who enjoy the beneficence of our forefathers? by Fellows, Students, Scholars, more especially those who are of some rank and eminence? Do ye, brethren, abound in the fruits of the Spirit, in holiness of mind, in self-denial and mortification, in seriousness and composure of spirit, in patience, meekness, sobriety, temperance; and in unwearied restless endeavours to do good to all men? Is this the general character of Fellows of Colleges? I fear it is not. Rather have not pride and haughtiness, impatience and peevishness, sloth and indolence, gluttony and sensuality been objected to us, perhaps not always by our enemies, nor wholly without ground? Many of us are more immediately consecrated to God, called to minister in holy things. Are we then patterns to the rest in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity? Did we indeed enter on this office with a single eye to serve God, trusting that we were inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon us this ministration, for the promoting of His glory, and the edifying of His people? Where are the seals of our apostleship? Who that were dead in trespasses and sins have been quickened by our word? Have we a burning zeal to save souls from death? Are we dead to the world and the things of the world? When we are smitten on the one cheek, do we not resent it? or do we turn the other also, not resisting the evil, but overcoming evil with good? Have we a bitter zeal, inciting us to strive sharply and passionately with those that are out of the way? Or is our zeal the flame of love, so as to direct all our

words with sweetness, lowliness, and meekness of wisdom?

‘Once more: what shall we say of the youth of this place? Have you either the form or the power of Christian godliness? Are you diligent in your easy business, pursuing your studies with all your strength? Do you redeem the time, crowding as much work into every day as it can contain? Rather, are ye not conscious that you waste day after day either in reading what has no tendency to Christianity, or in gaming, or in—you know not what? Are you better managers of your fortune than of your time? Do you take care to owe no man anything? Do you know how to possess your bodies in sanctification and honour? Are no drunkenness and uncleanness found among you? Yea, are there not many of you who glory in your shame? Are there not a multitude of you that are forsworn? I fear, a swiftly increasing multitude. Be not surprised, brethren—before God and this congregation I own myself to have been of the number solemnly swearing to observe all those customs which I then knew nothing of, and all those statutes which I did not so much as read over, either then, or for a long time afterwards. What is perjury, if this is not? But if it be, oh what a weight of sin, yea, sin of no common dye, lieth upon us! And doth not the Most High regard it?’

‘May it not be a consequence of this that so many of you are a generation of triflers with God, with one another, and your own souls? Who of you is, in any degree, acquainted with the work of the Spirit, His supernatural work in the souls of men?’

Can you bear, unless now and then in a church, any talk of the Holy Ghost? Would you not take it for granted if any one began such a conversation, that it was hypocrisy or enthusiasm? In the name of the Lord God Almighty I ask, What religion are ye of?’

We may hope that, even in that cold and worldly age, there was more than one in St. Mary’s Church, whose conscience was awakened so to re-echo that question, that he joined with his whole soul in the prayer with which the sermon concluded: ‘Lord, save, or we perish! Take us out of the mire that we sink not. Unto Thee all things are possible. According to the greatness of Thy power, preserve Thou them that are appointed to die!’

These words must not be confused with any utterance of Wesley’s properly belonging to his Oxford career. They testify rather to the lateness with which he awakened to that view of invisible things which in his after years underwent so little change of any kind. A diligent and successful course of study seems to have absorbed all his energies, and it was not till towards the close of his undergraduate career that that change passed over his mind which would have diverted his attention for ever from a Christian Virgil or Livy. His decision to enter the Church had led him to study divinity, and the two writers on which he had spent most of his time were Jeremy Taylor and the author of the ‘Imitation of Christ.’ There are many, probably, who having found, in their mature years, the deep spring of strength indicated by these writers, can yet recall the sense of dreariness and oppression with which on first taking up the ‘Imitation’ they were filled by the

cold and empty ideal which it seemed to set before them. We are, however, somewhat surprised to find that Wesley passed through such a stage, and it is well to remember the expression of feelings which he afterwards so entirely ignored. In a letter to his mother, who was at this time the *confidante* of all his religious experience, he complains of Kempis for setting before us a state of mind which can exercise only submission as the object of our pursuit, and of inverting instead of disciplining the natural tendencies of humanity; while he questions Taylor's injunctions of humility, as clashing with the claims of truth. 'I cannot think,' he writes in 1725, 'that when God sent us into the world He had decreed that we should be perpetually miserable in it. If our taking up the cross imply our bidding adieu to all satisfaction, how is it reconcilable with what Solomon expressly affirms of religion, "That her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace?"' He goes on to other indications of the same feeling. Taylor having said that in order to be truly humble we must be sure, in some sense or other, to think ourselves the worst in every company where we come, his young critic remarks, in phraseology curiously characteristic of his logical mind, that 'It is not a matter of choice whether we will believe ourselves worse than our neighbour or no, since we may distinctly perceive the truth of this proposition, "He is worse than I," and then the judgment is not free. One, for instance, who is in company with a freethinker, cannot avoid knowing himself to be the better of the two.' Mrs. Wesley answers her son as truly as irrelevantly, that these comparisons between our neighbour and oneself 'are rather the

effects of pride than of humility,' and does not seem to see that she is thereby simply justifying her son's criticism of Taylor. But her letter, though weak as a response, is the utterance of a sound and vigorous mind. 'We may in many cases think very meanly of ourselves without being humble,' she goes on; 'nay, sometimes our very pride will lead us to condemn ourselves, as when we have done anything which lessens that esteem of men we earnestly covet. . . . . Supposing that in some cases the truth of that proposition, "My neighbour is worse than I," be ever so evident, yet what does it avail? since two persons in different respects may be better and worse than each other.' The same good sense and bad logic is evident in her answer to Wesley's criticism of the 'Imitation,' for which work, however, she had not the slightest appreciation. She at once flies away from the special point of view in which her son sought for help, and turns to the general question of the lawfulness of pleasure, on which, perhaps, no criterion could be better either in thought or expression than that which she gives him, 'Take this rule—whatever impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes the relish off spiritual things, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself.' It would be well if her son had always remembered the limitation implied in the last words; at the present time, however, he seems to have been hardly awakened to the truth of which it is a limitation.

On other and deeper difficulties, his mother's answer seems to have given him satisfaction, for he inserted it, forty years afterwards, in the 'Arminian

Magazine.' As the time approached for his ordination, the Thirty-nine Articles occasioned him some perplexity, especially those which treat of Predestination. He had written to his mother: 'As I understand faith to be an assent to any truth upon rational grounds, I do not think it possible, without perjury, to swear I believe anything unless I have rational grounds for my persuasion. Now that which opposes reason cannot be said to stand upon rational grounds; and such, undoubtedly, is every proposition which is incompatible with Divine justice. What, then, shall I say of Predestination? An infallible purpose of God to deliver some from damnation does, I suppose, exclude from deliverance all who are not chosen; and if it was inevitably decreed from all eternity that such a determinate part of mankind should be saved, and none besides, a vast majority of the world were only born to eternal death. How is this consistent with the Divine justice or mercy? Is it merciful to ordain a creature to everlasting misery? Is it just to punish crimes which he could not but commit?'

It is interesting to observe the first protest from the youth of twenty-two against a doctrine which, fifty years later, split the body founded by him into two parts, separated by a deadly antagonism, and to mark the complete identity of the nascent and the mature thought. Half a century had not developed the idea in his mind. We might exchange this passage from his Oxford letter with any of the anti-Calvinist polemics of his old age, and not discover the difference.

His mother, it will be easily imagined, had not much to say about Predestination, but her letter gives

us a picture of a clear and vigorous understanding. 'You are somewhat mistaken in your idea of faith,' she tells him: 'all faith is assent, but all assent is not faith.' The Predestination in which we are to have faith, she thinks, is that Predestination to eternal life which God will bestow on those whom He foresees will deserve it. 'His prescience is no more the cause of the damnation of any soul than our foreseeing that the sun will rise to-morrow is the cause of its rising.' It was not, perhaps, strange that she, in writing these sentences, did not perceive that they implied a denial of salvation by faith; that if God's favour was attracted by anything good in man, it was not the source of everything good in man; but that Wesley should transcribe the letter, and offer it to the readers of the 'Arminian Magazine' as a medicine against the poison of Calvinism, without perceiving this, is a strange illustration of the bad logic possible to a supremely logical intellect.

The selection of family letters of which the above forms a part includes some from his father and his elder brother, Samuel, an upright and amiable representative of the old-fashioned High Churchism from which John was to diverge so widely, and with whom, in their after-life, he carried on much strenuous controversy. It is therefore satisfactory to find that he, too, was invoked as a counsellor in the perplexities—none of them reaching very deep—which Wesley encountered in his studies previous to ordination. Perhaps the question of Calvinism suggested that further question, which, if so many of the strongest intellects of the world had not failed to perceive the connection, one would have thought would always

follow on any discussion of Predestination. 'After all, if the greater number of God's creatures are to perish everlastingly, does it make much difference whether we say that an Almighty Being wills it, or only that He does not prevent it?' Samuel Wesley sent him a letter on eternal punishment, in which he made it plain to his understanding (apparently) how the sins of this life could merit everlasting pain. Sin, being an offence against an infinite Being, demanded an infinite punishment, &c. The damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed received the same kind of explanation from the elder Samuel Wesley; and, as his son includes these dissertations in the magazine he edited for his disciples, we presume that they satisfied his own mind. They raise our estimate of the filial piety rather than of the judgment which admitted them, but they do not contain such wonderful truisms as this excellent man sometimes sent to his son. 'If it is no harm,' he told him, when discussing the question of his ordination, 'to desire getting in the priest's office to eat a piece of bread, yet certainly a desire to lead a strict life is a better reason. If a man is unwilling to enter into holy Orders, it is easy to guess whether with common honesty he can say so much as that he trusts he is moved by the Holy Ghost.' This kind of thing must have taught Wesley to appreciate his mother's letters. Even these, however, have for us no other than a biographical interest. In this point of view they are important. They could not have been written to one who was not singularly ready to be taught. To how few clever young men of twenty-three could a mother say, with no softening expres-



sion of doubt, 'You are somewhat mistaken in your opinion of'—anything that was as open to his investigation as hers. Many faults are compatible with this submissiveness of intellect; some, perhaps, are even connected with it. But that impatience for dominion which has been ascribed to John Wesley assuredly belongs to neither class.

The correspondence with his mother of 1725 seems to mark the close of the first period of his mental history, which lasts, accordingly, to his twenty-second year. Up to this time we may imagine him a sedate, deferential youth, specially submissive to authority, not distinguished from his brothers in any way which should mark him out as a man destined to influence the course of religion in his country. The interval between his ordination in 1725 and his return from Georgia in 1738 is his High Church period; in a very important sense these words may be used to characterize his whole career, but to this interval they are applicable in their strict and ordinary acceptation. Had the young Fellow of Lincoln died in his thirtieth year, we can imagine that the tradition which might have preserved to Oxford the memory of the little society of which he was the head would have presented itself to us as a dim foreshadowing of the religious movement connected with that University in our own day. Seen in the clearness which his later history reflects upon that period, it may appear that the dissimilarity of the two is greater than their resemblance. There was not at any time in the mind of Wesley anything of that tenderness towards the past, that susceptibility to the poetic aspects of life, which we have learned to regard as a distin-

guishing characteristic of the High Church party of our days. But the principle on which that party have acted was Wesley's principle, and the differences between them and him, striking as they are, must in comparison be regarded as mere questions of detail.

It was during this period that he came under the influence of a remarkable man. William Law (1686—1761) is, if rightly understood, the author of that current of thought which is here designated the Evangelical reaction; in other words, it was he who first presented to an age distinguished by its worship of mediocrity the ideal of an *uncompromising* Christianity, and asserted that the mercy of God is shown, not, as the spirit of the time believed, in lowering His demands to suit us, but in raising us to meet them. When it is added that such a man as Warburton asserted that 'Law begot Methodism,' and that the work which alone recalls Law's name to the reading public of the present day—the 'Serious Call'—made a great impression on Wesley, and contains a description which was realized in the Methodist Society, he may be thought to be one of the most prominent figures in the history we are endeavouring to trace. 'If some persons should unite themselves into little societies,' Law wrote in 1727, 'professing voluntary poverty, retirement, and devotion, that some might be relieved in their charities, and all be benefited by their example, such persons would be so far from being chargeable with any superstition that they might be justly said to restore that piety which was the boast and glory of the Church when its greatest men were alive.' Wesley became personally intimate with Law (now

tutor to Gibbon's father) about 1729, and, after the quarrel which divided them, Law says, 'I was once a kind of oracle to Mr. Wesley.' Twice or thrice in the year, the two brothers travelled the whole distance from Oxford to London on foot to visit this oracle, the mark of a devotion in which they were not singular. Law occupied at this time the position of a kind of spiritual physician, to whom people brought their difficulties and those of their friends; and from his retirement at Putney, where the Gibbons were now living, exercised no small influence on the religious mind of the day. But the part of that influence which was absorbed by Wesley was the part which is least characteristic of this great and little-known thinker, and as such the reader has little temptation to dwell on it. The idea by which both were distinguished from their generation, and which to a great degree Law was the agent in communicating to Wesley, was not indeed a small one; but it was not that which will dwell most on the mind of any one who has entered into the spirit of Law's later works, and grasped that conception of the visible and invisible world as alike belonging to the realm of law, and the first a revelation and parable of the last, which he alone at that time had any glimpse of: and in comparison with which his vehement conviction, even if less wrought up with trivial and erroneous illustration, that *all* sin was hateful, would seem to us commonplace. But it was this alone which attracted Wesley to him; the other he could not understand, and if he could he would not have believed it. This slight notice, therefore, is all that can be afforded here to William Law.

Two sayings of the oracle, however, are memorable—one because it seems to have influenced Wesley so much, and the other because it seems to have influenced him so little. ‘We shall do well to aim at the highest degrees of perfection,’ Law said, and his pupil heard and remembered, ‘if we may thereby attain at least to mediocrity.’ The other would have saved him from much rationalistic narrowness if he could have fully received it. ‘Sir, you are troubled because you do not understand how God is dealing with you. Perhaps if you did, it would not so well answer His design. He is teaching you to trust Him further than you can see Him.’

It was thus that in the year 1725 a change passed over Wesley’s outward manner of life. He withdrew himself from all society; and, where circumstances brought him into close contact with any one, he insisted that the intercourse should be confined to religious subjects. These attempts to make his neighbours ‘whole Christians,’ on the part of a youth of twenty-three, could not fail to make him the object of strong dislike from a few, but it does not appear that this feeling was general before the year 1727, in which he undertook a curacy at Epworth. A Fellow of Lincoln, on Wesley’s quitting the college for his Lincolnshire curacy, takes the occasion of some civility from Wesley to write to him in the following terms:—‘I have had the satisfaction of receiving your kind and obliging letter, whereby you have given me a single instance of that goodness and civility which is essential to your character, and strongly confirmed to me the many encomiums which are given you in this respect by all who have the

happiness to know you. This makes me impatiently desirous of your acquaintance; and, when I hear those shining qualities which are daily mentioned in your praise, I cannot but lament the great misfortune we shall suffer in the absence of so agreeable a person from the college.' The college was not, however, to be much of a loser in a social point of view by Wesley's absence. He had resolved to make his removal from Christ Church, on his election to a fellowship of Lincoln, the occasion for his complete withdrawal from society, and carried out this intention resolutely. 'Entering now upon a new world,' he says, 'I resolved to have no acquaintance by chance, but by choice, and to choose such only as I had reason to believe would help me on my way to heaven. In consequence of this I narrowly observed the temper and behaviour of all that visited me. I saw no reason to believe that the greater part of these truly loved God. Therefore, when any of them came I behaved as courteously as I could, but to the question, "When will you come and see me?" I returned no answer. When they had come a few times, and found I still declined returning the visit, I saw them no more.' How many a shy, wavering spirit, hesitating on the boundary line of good and evil, must he thereby have determined to the downward path! So strong was this impulse to seclusion, that even the amount of society which remained after this careful sifting was more than he desired, and he was strongly tempted to accept the mastership of a Yorkshire school from no other attraction than the '*frightful* description' given of the situation, which was, he writes, 'so pent up between two hills,

that it was scarce accessible on any side, so that you can expect little company from without, and within there is none at all.' The school was given to another, to his own regret, perhaps, but not to his mother's. 'I am not at all sorry,' she writes to him, with accurate discrimination of his character, 'that you have missed the school. That way of life would not agree with your constitution, and I hope God has better things for you to do.' The disproportionate dislike always aroused by this unsocial impulse and other marks of an austere life was now quickened into manifestations which his mother calls 'brisk buffoonery,' and which drew from his father the warning that 'it is a callow virtue that cannot bear to be laughed at.' 'Be sure,' he adds, 'never to return the like treatment to your enemy.' They had a more agreeable subject of correspondence in John's election, and his father's joy is expressed with a refreshing heartiness. 'What will be my own fate before the summer is over, God knows,' he says in answer to the announcement of his son's success; 'but, wherever I am, my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln.' The poor old man had the further satisfaction in November of the same year (1726) of seeing his son chosen Greek lecturer, and Moderator of the classes. It is pleasant to reflect that this gleam of prosperity came to John Wesley in time to light up the twilight of his father's cloudy life. The rare privilege was granted to the elder Wesley of living to see the best days of his son, and of seeing no more.

He had also the consolation of two years of John's society, as his curate from 1727 to 1729. But the two

years in the Lincolnshire village were not probably very satisfactory to his son. The strong predilection with which he returned to Oxford, and the firm resolution he expressed a few years later, against his father's earnest wish, not to make interest for the presentation of the living, indicate a strong distaste as the result of his first parochial duty. He only returned to Oxford, however, on an arrangement which, to the disgrace of his college, was a novelty, by which the Moderators were from thenceforth to fulfil in person the duties of their office. This office was of no small importance in its influence on his character. The public disputations at Oxford were in the eighteenth century one of the principal University exercises, and the office of Moderator, or arbitrator at these arguments, which at Lincoln College were held every day, must, when attendance was duly exacted, have been a function entailing considerable attention, and leaving its mark on the intellect which had been thus exercised. There was no need of such exercise in order to develop Wesley's logical faculty, but it must have had a powerful effect in intensifying his natural bent in that direction. 'I could not avoid,' he says, with reference to this office, in one of the few passages from his writings which are not in good taste, 'I could not avoid acquiring hereby some degree of expertness in arguing, and especially in discerning and pointing out well-covered and plausible fallacies. I have since found abundant reason to praise God for giving me this honest art. By this, when men have hedged me in by what they call *demonstrations*, I have many times felt able to dash them in pieces, in spite of all their covers, to touch

the point where the fallacy lay, and it flew open in a moment.'

John Wesley's return to Oxford, in the autumn of 1729, is an era in the history of his country. From this time Methodism dates its existence. The little Society which had gathered together, under the influence of his brother Charles, united by a common inspiration after a higher life, was not indeed the germ of the Methodist Society; the members of this earlier band were scattered, and a new beginning was made afterwards. But from this time onwards Wesley was always the centre of such a society, and never by his own choice. It was at the entreaty of the Oxford Methodists that John became their director; the impulse at every stage of Methodism and at its first rise always came to him from without.

Charles Wesley, born at the close of 1708, and therefore John's junior by about five years, is, in many respects, the most interesting character of the two. Of a richer and a softer nature than his brother, we find in him many of those elements of a complete humanity, the absence of which makes the study of the stronger mind, like a journey through barren mountains, impressive, but monotonous. All the relations of life were with him much deeper and closer, kinship was warmer, friendship more enduring. Our best glimpses of the family life at Epworth are derived from his letters, one of which, written in 1734, to his brother Samuel, gives a lively picture of the difference of the two. 'I cannot excuse my brother' (John, always especially his brother) 'mentioning nothing of Epworth, when he was just come from it. Taciturnity as to family affairs is his infirmity, not



his fault ; for I daresay there is no *malice prepense* in it. It was much that he told me they were all well there, for he did not used to be so communicative.' The affectionate nature of Charles is instanced in the well-known anecdote of his refusing to leave home when a Mr. Garret Wesley, a gentleman of fortune in Ireland only by accident bearing the same name as himself, had offered to make him his heir if he would go with him to Ireland, and was referred by the elder Wesley to the schoolboy at Westminster. The circumstance has attained some celebrity from the fact that the person that accepted the offer, and took the name of Wesley, was the grandfather of the late Duke of Wellington, himself described in the Army List of 1800 as 'Arthur Wesley.' John, in narrating this circumstance, speaks of it as 'a fair escape.'

About the same time that John became Fellow of Lincoln, Charles was elected a Student of Christ Church. But the interval of their life together at Oxford before John's curacy in Lincolnshire was not a time of close union between them. The younger brother responded to the attempts made for his conversion by the elder with an impatient refusal to 'become a saint all at once,' and it is an infallible testimony to the spirit in which these overtures were made, that their repulse produced no estrangement between the brothers. The 'quiet, harmless life,' which, according to the testimony of John, he led at this time, formed no dark background for any sudden ecstasy of conversion, and afforded no excuse for any pertinacity of entreaty. But John's influence was more potent in his absence than his presence. The exhortations which had been repulsed when the

brothers were together were eagerly sought when separation had taught the younger their value. Towards the close of the period of John's curacy to his father, the letters of Charles—to use the phraseology which has now become merely technical, but at that cold and soulless time was full of reality—'became serious,' and in the beginning of this year we have a request to his brother for directions respecting the one action which one would have thought best left to a man's own inclination,—how to write a diary. 'I would willingly write a diary of my actions,' he writes in January 1729, 'but do not know how to go about it. What particulars am I to take notice of? Am I to give my thoughts and words, as well as deeds, a place in it? I am to mark all the good and ill I do; and what besides? Must I not take the account of my progress in learning, as well as religion? What cypher can I make use of? If you would direct me to the same or like method of one of your own, I would gladly follow it, for I am convinced of the usefulness of such an undertaking. I shall be at a stand till I hear from you.'

All Charles's letters of this date bear evidence to the influence of this spirit of reverence for his brother. In May he writes: 'Providence has at present put it into my power to do some good. I have a modest, humble, well-disposed youth who lives near me, and have been somewhat instrumental in keeping him so. He had got into vile hands, and is now broke loose. He durst not receive the Sacrament except at the usual times,' (*i.e.* three times a year), 'for fear of being laughed at. By convincing him of the duty of frequent communicating, I have prevailed upon him to

receive once a week.' Then, after a few words more upon this subject, he goes on: 'I earnestly long for the blessing God is about to send me in you. I am sensible this is my day of grace, and that upon my employing the time before our next meeting and parting will in great measure depend my condition for eternity.' When John Wesley's character as a religious leader is in question, let those words from a younger brother be well weighed against any imputation of arrogance or love of power. No relation is so entirely poisoned by such faults as that which is here exhibited in all its purity.

The brotherhood originated at Oxford between Charles Wesley and the youth whom he had reclaimed from vicious company was soon enlarged by the companionship of one or two other young men, who met at stated intervals, and took the Sacrament together. The exactness of method which this little society induced in its members led to the title of Methodists being affixed to it—a title supposed by Wesley to have been taken from an old sect of physicians. The *Methodici* are contrasted by Bentley with the Empirics, as carrying out their cures according to a regular system of treatment. Such an allusion in a writing of a great scholar was not out of place, but it does not seem likely that the 'honest merry fellows who think themselves obliged in point of common civility to make you damnable drunk' (to quote a description of the Oxford wits of that day, taken from a cotemporary periodical) would have gone so far afield to find a nickname. It was a name given, apparently, to more than one sect of Nonconformists in the seventeenth century, and it needed no venerable

pedigree to be applicable to a set of young men whose only peculiarity, in the eyes of the outward world, was their rigid method of life. Only a fallacious association with the late peculiarities attendant on Wesley's preaching can occasion any question as to the name of Methodism.

The true founder of the Methodists was Mrs. Wesley. The following letter, written to her son Samuel in the year 1709, when he was a scholar at Westminster, which was no doubt paraphrased in many utterances to John or Charles, suggests a source of the nickname given to her sons which will save us travelling back to the time of Nero. Though neither John nor Charles are here addressed, the affiliation of the society they founded with the system of education here indicated is sufficiently plain. 'I would advise you,' she tells him, 'as much as possible to throw your business into a certain method, by which means you will learn to improve every precious moment, and find an unspeakable facility in the performance of your respective duties. I will tell you what rule I used to observe when I was in my father's house, and had as little, if not less, liberty than you have now. I used to allow myself as much time for recreation as I spent in private devotion, not that I always spent so much, but I gave myself leave to go so far, but no farther. So in all things else, appoint so much time for sleep, eating, company, &c. In all things endeavour to act upon principle, and do not live like the rest of mankind, who pass through the world like straws upon a river. Often put this question to yourself—Why do I do this or that? By which means you will come to such a

steadiness and consistency as becomes a reasonable creature and a good Christian.'

The little society which 'endeavoured to act upon principle' must have formed a special welcome for Wesley on his return to Oxford. About this time, we are told, he took a long journey to see 'a serious man,' not otherwise described by his biographers, whose words must have weighed deeply with him as he went so far to seek them:—'Sir, you are to serve God and go to heaven. Remember, you cannot serve Him alone. You must therefore find companions, or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.' However false these words may be as abstract truth, they must have borne to Wesley the aspect of a divine message. A coincidence with circumstances may often give a meaning to trivial or even mistaken utterance; and the entreaty of his brother, that he would become the director of the little Oxford Methodist Society, must have been to him, in the highest sense of the word, a call. The Society gradually enlarged; the influence of the brothers was increased by their taking pupils, some of whom joined the brotherhood: those who refused to do so did not cease to speak with praise of teachers who appear to have been diligent and successful. Meantime the Society continued their efforts for mutual improvement, meeting in the evening of week-days to read the classics, and on Sundays to study divinity. A scheme of self-examination drawn up apparently by Wesley exhibits more forcibly the aim and character of this little association than any other description that can be given of it. 'Have I,' the student of Christchurch or Lincoln was to ask

himself, 'been simple and recollected in everything I did?' and then followed questions designed to unfold more fully the claims of this simplicity and recollectedness, which consists in an entire and supreme devotion to the will of God, and an unbroken exercise of this devotion in every act and word of life. 'Have I prayed with fervour?' and then came a list of the times of day at which the omission of this fervent prayer was a sin; and certain questions which imply a return of the mind upon itself that must have made fervour in prayer or in anything else utterly impossible, and which forcibly recall Mrs. Wesley's letter: 'Have I in private prayer frequently stopped short and observed what fervour? Have I at the beginning of every prayer or paragraph owned I cannot pray?' The examination on the subject of love of man, which follows, makes us feel that if to ask ourselves very elaborately if we had performed a particular duty were the best way to perform it in future, nothing could be added by the loftiest aspirations to the catechism which Wesley has here drawn up. 'Have I embraced every possible opportunity of doing good and preventing evil? Have I thought anything too dear to part with to serve my neighbour? Have I given any one up until he *expressly* renounced me? Have I, before I spoke to any one, learned as far as I could his temper, way of thinking, past life, and peculiar hindrances, internal and external? Have I disputed upon any practical point, unless it was to be practised just then? Have I rejoiced with my neighbour in pleasure, and grieved with him in pain? Have I received his infirmities with pity? Have I thought or spoke unkindly of him?' These questions

would distinguish him, who could answer them satisfactorily as almost an ideal Christian; the reader can only object to them so far as he believes them to defeat their own aim. There are others, concerning which we might doubt if the aim was desirable; but, on the whole, the only regret which the reader carries away from this scheme of self-examination is that in after years Wesley seems to have narrowed the ideal indicated by such questions.

The 'Holy Club,' as this little society was called by the wits of the University, was not established with any view to ministrations among the poor, and the enlargement of its aims to include this was not due to Wesley, but to a youth named Morgan, one of the earliest members of the little band of Oxford Methodists. An accidental call at the gaol in the summer of 1730 led him to a regular course of visiting there, and shortly afterwards he induced the brothers to accompany him. Wesley acceded at once to the proposition of becoming a regular visitor, but when Morgan proposed to him to include in these visits the sick poor of the town he hesitated. He would not proceed to a step which at the present day would appear unquestionably harmless to all who did not think it highly meritorious, without obtaining sanction, and wrote to his father for advice. The hearty approbation which he received was accompanied with a gentle rebuke for the hesitation which had occasioned its being sought for. 'I am afraid,' his father wrote, 'lest the main objection you make against your going on in the business of the prisoners may secretly proceed from flesh and blood. For who can harm you if you be followers of that which is

good, and which will be one of the marks by which the Shepherd of Israel will know His sheep in the last day? If it were possible for you to suffer a little in the cause, you would have but a confessor's reward. You own that none but such as are out of their senses would be prejudiced against you for acting in this manner. Go on, then, in God's name, in the path in which the Saviour has directed you, and in which your father went before you. When I was an undergraduate I visited those in the gaol there, and reflect on it with great satisfaction to this day.' He concluded with advising his son to obtain the consent of the superintendent of the prison, and that of the Bishop of Oxford, both of which directions Wesley at once followed, with a similar result; the Bishop gave not his consent only, but his gratified encouragement. Wesley's scruples were now at rest, and he proceeded in the path to which he had been guided, with so little exercise of will on his own part. With this acknowledgment of corporate existence, however, his little society received signs of a very opposite estimate. Vehement attempts were made to detach its members, not merely by idle lads, but by men of position and learning; by violence, by threats, or by persuasion, several of the little band were induced to confine their presence at the Sacrament to the ordinary three times a year. We can hardly imagine a situation more trying to young men than that of the Wesleys at this crisis. Had they been the hot-headed fanatics they have been represented, how rapidly the arrogance of conscious martyrdom would have sprung up within them! The actual result could only be the outgrowth of a very different spirit



John Wesley, now recognised as the 'Father of the Holy Club,' wrote to his father again seeking for guidance, and thus submitted himself to the decision of a man whom he must have felt to be as decidedly his intellectual inferior as he was far behind him in spiritual insight. Samuel Wesley, however, showed in this correspondence with his son nothing but the strong part of his character. His response to this appeal was fitted to encourage all that was good in his son's efforts without intensifying anything that may have been singular in them. 'The less you value yourselves for these unfashionable duties,' he says, '(for there are no such things as works of supererogation,) the more all good and wise men will value you;' and there is no disposition in his letter to magnify the attacks made upon the Society into anything that could be dignified with the title of persecution. If his son had sought no further advice after this, we should still have thought he had gone to the outside of what was necessary in the way of diffidence and caution. But, as if fearful that his father might be too partial a guide, he now turned to an aged clergyman in the neighbourhood of his home, whose response, like all those which he had sought, was favourable to perseverance in the path on which he had entered. In the winter of this year (1730-31) Wesley attempted to meet the still continuing attacks with drawing up the following list of queries, which all who blamed them were asked to consider. That all that was characteristic of the Society is included in the conduct here justified we can hardly doubt, when we reflect that any important omission in this declaration would have been a challenge to their

critics to add the accusation of hypocrisy to that of fanaticism. The chief of these questions are given below.

‘Whether we may not try to do good among the young gentlemen of the University; particularly whether we may not endeavour to convince them of the necessity of being Christians, and of being scholars?’

‘Whether we may not try to convince them of the necessity of method and industry, in order to either learning or virtue?’

‘Whether we may not try to confirm and increase their industry by communicating as often as they can?’

‘May we not try to do good to those who are hungry, naked, or sick? If we know any necessitous family, may we not give them a little money, clothes, or physic, as they want?’

This body of articles, as the questions in fact were—for no one of them could any nominal Christian have answered in the negative—seems to have increased the number both of their friends and their enemies. The former sent them money to help forward their schemes of beneficence, the latter called a meeting among the seniors of the College, in order to consult on the best measures to stop the growth of *enthusiasm*. Perhaps the frequent use of this word is the best measure of the change which has come over public feeling since the days of the Wesleys.

‘I do not like your being called a club,’ writes Samuel Wesley, jun., to his brothers, in April 1731; ‘that name is really calculated to do mischief. But the other charge of enthusiasm can weigh with none

but such as drink away their senses, or never had any, for surely activity in social duties, and a strict attendance on the ordained means of grace, are the strongest guards imaginable against it.' The spirit of antagonism roused by Methodism is well expressed in a letter to Morgan from his father, in March 1732: — 'You cannot conceive,' he tells him, 'what a noise that ridiculous society which you are engaged in has made here. Besides the particulars of the great follies of it at Oxford, it gave me sensible trouble to hear that you are noted for going into the villages about Holt, calling the children together, and teaching them their prayers and Catechism.' Appalled by fanaticism such as this, the distressed father turned for advice to a 'wise, learned, and pious clergyman,' who, after informing Mr. Morgan that he had known the worst of consequences follow from such blind zeal, added that these young men might 'walk uprightly and safely without endeavouring to outdo all the good bishops, clergy, and other pious men of present and past ages.'

This letter was written in March 1732. In November of the same year, the younger Morgan had passed away from this world, and his father wrote to Wesley in these terms: 'The account given me of your own and your friends' conduct, signified in a style becoming the best of men, makes me almost wish I were among you. I am very much obliged to you for the great pains you have been at in transcribing so long and particular an account, and shall always be ready to vindicate you from any calumny. I shall, I hope, find some opportunities to make amends, and beg you will upon all occasions let

me know when I can be serviceable to you in this kingdom.' The letter shows us the power of the terrible teacher Death, rather than the effect of any explanation of Wesley's. The nature of that fanaticism which had alarmed Mr. Morgan is instanced in the following letters, written by John Wesley to his parents, in December of 1730 and June 1731, after the Methodist Society had lasted more than a year. 'To-morrow night,' he tells his father, 'I expect to be in company with the gentlemen who did us the honour to take the first notice of our Society. I have terrible reasons to think he is as slenderly provided with humanity as with sense and learning. However, I must not let slip this opportunity, because he is at present in some distress occasioned by his being about to dispute in the schools on Monday, though he is not furnished with such arguments as he wants. I intend, if he has not procured them before, to help him to some arguments that I may at least remove that prejudice from him, "that we are friends to none but those who are as queer as ourselves."' "

This letter shows his attitude to his opponents ; that towards his disciples is indicated in the following passages, addressed to his mother (June 1731) :—'We debated with Mr. Kirkam, "What was meant by being righteous over-much?" All the ways of being too righteous or too strict which we could think of were these : either the carrying some one particular virtue to so great a height as to make it clash with some others ; or the laying too much stress on the instituted means of grace to the neglect of the weightier matters of the Law ; or the multiplying pru-

dential means upon ourselves so far as to obstruct the end we aimed at by them. Our opponents seemed to think my brother and me in some danger of being too strict in this last sense, and of laying burdens on ourselves too heavy to be borne, and consequently too heavy to be of any use to us. It is easy to observe that almost every one thinks that rule totally needless which he does not need himself; calls that degree of the Christian spirit which he does not himself aim at, enthusiasm. If, therefore, we plead for either (not as if we thought the former absolutely needful, neither as if we had attained the latter), it is no great wonder if those who are not for us in practice should be against us. If you, who are a less prejudiced judge, have perceived us faulty in this matter, too superstitious, or too enthusiastic, or whatever it is to be called, we earnestly desire to be informed of our error. This is a subject we would understand with as much accuracy as possible, it being hard to say which is the worst consequence, the being too strict, the really carrying things too far, or the being frightened by those terrible words from what, if it be not directly necessary, would at least be useful.' The subject is resumed in a letter to his brother Samuel shortly afterwards, written with something less of hesitation and deference, but in a tone equally free from heat or vehemence. The letter contains some curious information as to the charges against him. Exactly those peculiarities in his conduct, he informs his brother, which they were agreed in regarding as desirable, are those singled out by his opponents as the object of their peculiar attack. Others were only brought in to furnish a pretext for the dislike and opposition for

which the practice of rising early, of secluded habits, and strict economy might seem too small a cause.

‘But it will be said,’ he goes on, ‘I am whimsical. If by whimsical be meant simply singular, I own it; if singular without any reason, I deny with both my hands, and am ready to give a reason to any man that asks me of every custom wherein I wilfully differ from the world. I grant in many single cases I differ unreasonably from others, but not wilfully; no, I shall extremely thank any who will teach me to help it till I have more breeding or more prudence, to neither of which I am disposed naturally; and I greatly fear my acquired stock of either will give me small assistance.’ Is this the language of a fanatic?

One thing must be carefully noted through this correspondence. Against the imputation of unnecessary precision and strictness in his own conduct, Wesley brings the temperate, calm, and modest defence of the necessities of weakness. Against the imputation which we naturally imagine to account for the hostility shown towards him, that he was censorious and rigid in his demands upon others, he says nothing, for the reason that it was never made. There is no indication that at Oxford Wesley showed any disposition for that censorious and exclusive spirit which has been the common and often just reproach of religious persons; on the contrary, his defence of his own conduct would fail if he had set up his own rules as valid on all who would lead a holy life. His difference from his elder brother he justifies on the express grounds that the latter had made more progress in holiness than himself. ‘Mirth, I grant, is very fit for you, but does it follow that it is fit for me?’

Are the same tempers, any more than the same words or actions, fit for all circumstances? . . . . You are very glad because you have passed from death to life. Well, but let him be afraid who knows not whether he is to live or die! Whether this be my condition or no, who can tell better than myself?’

The account of the difficulties which began thus early to embarrass the path of John Wesley, and at once to oppose and solidify the little society of which he was the head, are given thus at length, because in the only biography of Wesley which is known to the general reader his conduct at this time appears, in the opinion of the present writer, altogether misrepresented. The tinge of priestly arrogance, and the spirit of censoriousness which erects its own needs into tests of holiness, cannot, by any one who would give a faithful portrait of Wesley, be excluded from his later years, but it is altogether unjust to infuse it into a sketch of his Oxford life. Nor is this a trifling error, a mere question of more or less. Arrogance, narrowness, and illiberal judgment are evils absolutely—to account for is not to justify them; but they indicate a very different character, according as they are the cause or effect of hostility, and it is most unjust to one who was driven into antagonism with the ways of the world by the discovery that they were regarded as incompatible with a religious life, to represent him as provoking that antagonism by narrowing the religious life to exclude the ways of the world.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE OXFORD METHODISTS.

BEFORE quitting the birthplace of Methodism to contemplate the disastrous attempt to plant it on a foreign shore, it remains to notice those other members of the Oxford Methodists whose names either are, or deserve to be, familiar to the reader. First among these is that great preacher for whom a claim might with some plausibility be put forth as deserving even more than Wesley to occupy the first place in the religious history of his times; and though any one who estimates the two men fairly will put George Whitefield below John Wesley, it must be confessed that he had some qualities with which it is peculiarly refreshing to come in contact after those which in the character of his spiritual twin-brother extort our respect rather than win our love. The cold self-sufficiency (if that word be, as it ought to be, drained of all blame) of the stronger nature brings into a peculiarly pleasing aspect the humility which was in the weaker united with a considerable share of vanity; and Whitefield's very mistakes of judgment have a certain value, as they bring out that readiness for



perceiving himself in the wrong which is so conspicuously absent in the character of Wesley. Never was there a kindlier or more gracious nature than Whitefield's, and we receive his information (certainly not superfluous) that God had endowed him with 'a fruitful genius, ready wit, and great sagacity,' with a smile at the *naïve* confidingness, rather than any displeasure at the want of self-knowledge betrayed in the assertion.

In the fragment of autobiography whence we derive our knowledge of Whitefield's youth he describes himself in the blackest colouring, and mentions facts which prove it to be, in certain parts of the picture, correct. He frequently stole money out of his mother's pocket, as well as keeping back that which he received on her account as mistress of the Bell Inn, at Gloucester, where he was born, and where, for a time, he acted as a common drawer. He was the companion of young men of loose lives and conversation, and at times a sharer in what was evil in their practices; while, from his point of view, we must add to these unquestionable causes of penitence and shame tastes and pursuits which, to the generality of mankind, would appear perfectly innocent. That strong taste for acting which, little as he suspected it, was gratified in the pulpit, had been previously gratified on the stage. His histrionic talents were celebrated at the school of St. Mary de Crypt, Gloucester, which he attended for some years, and he was chosen to act a principal part at the plays acted by the boys, on solemn occasions, before the corporation of Gloucester—celebrations which, in after days, he remembered with self-reproach quite

as poignant as that associated with his early thefts. But, even if we leave this last trait in the shadow he has cast over it, the picture is not so dark as he endeavours to make it. The money which he stole from his mother he often gave to the poor. And a still stranger combination of pious feeling and dishonesty is found in some of his thefts from other persons, which sometimes consisted of books of devotion! His religious feelings were always lively. He spent the money that was given him in buying a book of Bishop Ken's; and long before the time of life at which Wesley complained of the asceticism of Thomas à Kempis, the severe and lofty raptures of the unknown writer who, under that name, has shaped the secret utterances of so many hearts, formed the delight of George Whitefield. He was, on the whole, a good son—such, at least, is the inference it seems warrantable to draw from the fact of his having performed menial offices in the inn when his mother's business declined, and the extreme grief she manifested on his voyage to Georgia. He was popular with his master, who, after this interval of menial life, when the prospect of a servitorship at Pembroke College recalled him to school, gave him a hearty welcome, and encouraged him in his renewal of study. He was popular also with the undergraduates of Pembroke, who, pleased with his skilled and alert attendance when he went to the University, chose him as their servitor. There must have been much that was amiable in his character to make itself felt in such opposite directions. On the whole, his account of the years before his conversion suggests that strange combination of devoutness and vice

which is not so unnatural, or perhaps so unusual, as it appears at first sight. There was much in his early development to be remembered with a blush, but his own assertion that, 'from my cradle to my manhood, I see nothing in me but a fitness to be damned,'—assuredly not true of any human being that ever lived,—was more untrue of him than of many. The truth is, that Whitefield composed his autobiography under the influence at once of that Calvinistic creed which had so strong a hold over him and of that histrionic feeling which it is equally necessary to recognize if we would understand his history. It was essential to the Calvinist that nothing but evil should be found in him before his conversion; it was essential to the actor that this unconverted state should be carried on, in its unmodified blackness, to give a fine edge to the glory of regeneration. It was not that Whitefield consciously modified his facts to suit his theory; but, as he wrote, he threw himself into his part—he was a converted sinner, a brand plucked from the burning; the sin must be as dark, the fire as fierce, as possible, that the sense of rapturous deliverance might be at its keenest.

For a whole year before Whitefield's introduction to the Wesleys he had watched from the distance of a reverent admiration their severe and regular course of self-discipline and philanthropy. It must by this time have attained a considerable celebrity, as the innkeeper's son at Gloucester had heard much talk of 'the young men who, because they lived by rule, were called Methodists;' his heart had been already attracted towards them, and the frequent abuse of them which met his ears at Pembroke College only

strengthened that affection by affording it the exercise of indignant defence. Yet he had not ventured to give any more direct utterance to this affection, and the spiritual companionship for which he thirsted had to be thrust upon him. In the year 1733 Charles Wesley took the occasion of a common charitable interest to press upon him the friendship he had not ventured to seek, and their intercourse became close and affectionate. Charles introduced him to 'all the other Methodists,' and so, of course, to him who was recognized as their chief and director. The first mention of any intercourse between them, however, occurs many months after this, when Whitefield, by the austerities in which he outdid all the other Methodists, and the morbid state of mind of which this asceticism was partly the cause and partly the effect, had aroused the anxiety of his modest and sympathetic friend, who thereupon 'recommended him to his brother, as one better fitted to deal with spiritual maladies than himself.' Whitefield's journal, during this interval, needs only a little intensifying to pass for the account of the austerities of some mediæval ascetic, though one would have thought self-imposed privations hardly needed in a college where to attend the Sacrament was to make oneself a target for 'all the polite students,' and where the practice of visiting the poor was an offence to be punished by the threat—which it can have been hardly possible to carry out—of expulsion. The young servitor put up with the wit and humour of the undergraduates, but the displeasure of the Master took him by surprise, and in a moment of timidity and confusion he promised to discontinue this 'extravagance' which had caused so

much distress to the father of Morgan, and which appears to have been the head and front of Methodist offence. It is almost equally characteristic of his somewhat fitful character that he made, and that he immediately broke, the promise to discontinue this offensive practice.

But the annoyances to which at that anti-Christian time every Oxonian was subject who sought to mould his life on the precepts of Christ, did not appease the ascetic hunger of Whitefield. 'Like them' (*i.e.* the Methodists), he says, 'I joined in keeping the statutes by fasting Wednesdays and Fridays. . . . By degrees I began to leave off eating fruits and such like, and gave the money I usually spent in that way to the poor. My apparel was mean. I thought it unbecoming a penitent to have his hair powdered. I wore woollen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes; and, though I was then convinced that the kingdom of God did not consist in meats and drinks, yet I resolutely persisted in these acts of self-denial, because I found them great promoters of the spiritual life.' The approach of Lent rendered these austerities yet more stringent. 'Our friends kept this holy season very strictly, eating no flesh during the six weeks, except on Saturdays and Sundays. I abstained frequently on Saturdays also, and ate nothing on the other days (except Sunday) but sage tea without sugar, and coarse bread.' We see that his abstinence was carried beyond that of the other Methodists in the matter of fasting; it was also carried into directions where they seem never to have thought of it. He used to go into Christ Church Walk at night to perform his devotions, and remained in the inclement

weather (this was just before Lent) for about two hours upon his knees. Nor did the rising tide of asceticism spare purer and higher than physical enjoyment: the solace of common worship and spiritual sympathy seemed to him, like the comfort of warm rooms and good food, an indulgence to be renounced; the ordinances even of his Church were in this mortification of the very self to be laid aside, and the soul to abide naked in the presence of God. It was in consequence of this last stage of asceticism, when Whitefield, cutting away the enjoyments that lay nearest his heart, broke an engagement with his friend, that Charles Wesley discovered him in a state of depression consequent on this attempt to live in an exhausted receiver, and recommended him to his brother. John advised him to resume all his externals, but not to depend on them in the least. Whitefield uses strong words in describing his sufferings in this interval,—uses them, doubtless, with the most perfect sincerity; and certainly the mental struggle ended in serious illness, which seems to have brought him near the grave. And yet we do not receive from his narrative an impression of a spirit that has passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. We are spectators of a violent struggle, yet there is something external about it; all feelings are vehement, not one is really profound. The vehemence of this conflict, however, was unquestioned, and we are not surprised that John Wesley did not prove a very skilful physician in the spiritual malady which they produced, and which ended in physical malady. Restoration to health of mind was to be the direct gift of Heaven, not conveyed through any

earthly instrument. But that interval of spiritual rest, afforded by bodily illness, was blessed to him through tokens 'of God's care, more precious than even human kindness.' Kindness, indeed, even paternal kindness, Whitefield met with in a high degree from a quarter where we least expect it; a fresh proof of his amiable nature is manifest in the interest he had inspired in his tutor, who seems to have been a better sort of Dr. Waldegrave, and who, he informs us, 'lent him books, gave him money, furnished him with a physician, and behaved to him in all respects like a father.' 'The blessed Spirit was all this time purifying my soul. All my former gross, notorious, and even my heart sins also, were now set home upon me, of which I wrote down some remembrances immediately, and confessed them before God morning and evening.' During these exercises he found and felt in himself 'that I was delivered from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me. The spirit of mourning was taken from me, and I knew what it was truly to rejoice in God my Saviour. For some time I could not avoid singing psalms wherever I was, but my joy became gradually more settled. Thus were the days of my mourning ended, after a long night of desertion and temptation; the star, which I had seen at a distance before, began to appear again; the day-star arose in my heart.'

The next member of the Oxford band who claims our notice is fitly associated with Whitefield, for the two were friends through life, and belonged to the same division of Methodism when the Calvinistic controversy finally divided the Wesleyan Methodist body from those who may be regarded as the ancestors of

the Evangelical body in the English Church, and estranged Wesley from one who addressed him in early life as 'my father and my friend.' James Hervey, author of the once well-known 'Meditations,' which went through twenty editions in a few years, was just ten years younger than Wesley, and came to Oxford soon after his return in 1729, where he became his pupil, and regarded him as his spiritual father. He was born in a small Northampton village in 1713, and died at Weston Favell, the family living, to which he had succeeded, in 1758. The few intervening events affording material for his biographers are the publication of his works, only one of which is known to the present generation even by name. Yet in one sense they may be called the most remarkable writings of the day: we have no others the popularity of which is so inexplicable. Let the reader judge from the following extracts, by no means exceptional specimens of his eloquence. He is expatiating on the goodness of the Creator, as illustrated to his eyes by the sights which meet them in a beautiful morning in a garden. 'Those sheep,' he exclaims, turning his attention to the distant fields, 'which give their udders to be drained by the frisking lambs, are fattening their flesh for *our* support, and, while they fill their own fleeces, are providing for *our* comfortable clothing.' There is plenty more of this natural theology. He supposes himself to be contemplating a distant range of hills, and, in order to bring them to do their Creator some credit, breaks forth into the following poetic reflection: 'Bare and deformed as their surface may appear, their bowels are fraught with hidden treasures whence Industry may draw



her materials.' The ocean in the like manner is 'the cistern of the universe, to us particularly kind in securing us from the dread of foreign invasion;' while the purple expanse of heath (though it needs a half apology for its wildness) stirs in his mind gratitude to the kind Providence which supports 'several valuable creatures without any expense or care of ours.' There is no room to doubt that these marvellous reflections were read with eagerness not only by our own countrymen, but their cotemporaries throughout Europe, for the 'Meditations' were translated into almost every modern language. The writer confesses to a certain perplexity at having to chronicle evidence of a feeling so wide-spread, and so apparently unaccountable. The aim of Hervey is well expressed in his 'Theron and Aspasia.' 'Let us,' says one of the speakers in the dialogue, 'endeavour to make religious conversation, which is in all respects desirable, in some degree fashionable.' It was an aim apparently recognized as desirable by Hervey's cotemporaries, and the public will forgive much to a writer with whose objects it is in sympathy.

It does not appear that Hervey remembered his Oxford Methodism, in after years, with much satisfaction. It was through Whitefield's instrumentality, he says, he was first brought to a knowledge of the truth, and Whitefield describes him in 1755 as one who 'hath learned and preached Christ *for some years*'—an expression throwing back a shade of heathen darkness on the Methodism of 1732. Whitefield had a great admiration for him. 'The author of the "Meditations,"' he writes in 1749, 'is my old

friend, and a most heavenly-minded creature, one of the first of the Methodists, who is contented with a small cure, and gives all he has to the poor.' Whitefield persuaded him to sit for his picture, sent him his compositions to revise, requiting him by a like office, and compliments him on his 'sweet dialogues,' which he assures him will 'delight and warm many a heart,' and the wonderful prophecy seems to have been fulfilled. He had, however, tributes more valuable than these marvellous manifestations of bad taste. He made himself so greatly beloved at Bideford, where he was for some time curate, that on the appointment of a successor the people offered to continue his stipend out of their own pockets, if they might but keep him with them. He was remarkable, moreover, for his liberal and yet discriminating almsgiving. There must have been something in his nature that touched the better part of the mind of his day, though it does not survive in his writings.

Both Whitefield and Hervey belong to the Calvinistic Methodists. Of the proper Wesleyans no Oxford specimens can be found but the two Wesleys. It remains, however, to notice a representative of a third party in this great revival—a party which need only be mentioned at present as the English followers of the 'United Brethren,' commonly called Moravians, noted by Coleridge as fulfilling, with trifling exceptions, his ideal of a Church. The name of John Gambold, though less well known than any other mentioned in the present chapter, is perhaps to the reader of the present day more interesting than any. He was never at all celebrated, and he is now only known, if

known at all, by his poem on the 'Mystery of Life,' which is included in most collections of religious verses, and relieves the insipidity of the larger portion of such collections with a gleam of real poetry. The concluding stanza may be quoted as showing a far more liberal estimate of life than that of his more celebrated cotemporaries.

'Ere long, when Sovereign Wisdom wills,  
My soul an unknown path shall tread,  
And strangely leave, who strangely fills  
This frame, and waft me to the dead.  
Oh what is death ! 'tis life's last shore,  
Where vanities are vain no more ;  
Where all pursuits their goal obtain,  
And life is all retouched again ;  
Where in their bright results shall rise,  
Thoughts, virtues, friendships, griefs, and joys.'

In several other passages from his short and few writings we find indications of feeling with which the religious mind of our own day is more in sympathy than in anything that could be quoted from the other Oxford Methodists. Entered as servitor in Christ Church, Oxford, in his seventeenth year, he was prepared to adhere to the little society which sprang up at that college so shortly afterward, by the shock of losing an excellent father, which left him dislocated from all his former employments and interests, innocent and valuable as they appear to have been, and absorbed in those anxieties which must darken the mind that looks on this world solely as a preparation for the next. In this state of mind, the austere and useful life of the new brotherhood presented him with exactly that framework of external duty which appeared to correspond with the new longings within. With them,

therefore, he visited the prisoners and the poor, fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays, bore the scoffs flung at those who attended the weekly Sacrament and kept the statutes, and diligently examined himself whether he had been 'simple and recollected.' His intercourse was close and affectionate with both brothers, specially the younger, and the sympathy which united them must have belonged wholly to the purest part of the nature of each. Yet all was in vain—he found no peace in their severe and lofty range of duties, and it is probable that he had in some degree withdrawn from them before leaving Oxford, as his biographer tells us that the only issue of his union with them was a more complete surrender to the melancholy which had oppressed him, and which must have returned with the added weight of frustrate hope. Moreover, an entire seclusion from all society, that he might give himself up to the study of the early Fathers, was a plan of life hardly compatible with the Methodist scheme of missionary usefulness. Wesley's attitude towards him at this time is exhibited in the following extract in an amiable light, which might probably form a much larger proportion of the picture if we had more accounts of the founder of Methodism from his early friends:—'If any one could have provoked Mr. Wesley,' says Gambold, 'I should, for I was very slow in coming into their measures, and very remiss in doing my part. I frequently contradicted his assertions, or, what is the same thing, distinguished upon them. I hardly ever submitted to his advice at the time he gave it, though I relented afterwards. One time he was in fear that I had taken up notions that were not safe, and pursued my spiritual

improvement in an erroneous, because inactive way, so he came and stayed with me near a week. He con- doled with me the incumbrances of my constitution, heard all I had to say, and endeavoured to pick out my meaning, and yielded to me as far as he could. I never saw greater humility in him than at this time.'

The life of secluded study in which Gambold re- mained in spite of this stimulating influence was but little changed by his acceptance of the small living of Stanton Harcourt, where, however, he was received with respect among all classes whom his retiring nature would allow him to visit. He never appears to have shared anything of that aggressive spirit of conver- sion which at once qualified Wesley for the work he had to do in the world, and disqualified him for a par- ticipation in its lighter interests; and the course of thought and study in which he (Gambold) had en- gaged was such as to add interest to his conversation, without giving it austerity. 'Every one's curiosity,' says his biographer, 'was highly gratified, who could hear a man of the eighteenth century converse like one of the third'—a statement which, indeed, we can- not receive without very large modification, but which corresponds with much that we shall have to notice afterwards, indicating a general thirst, throughout the last century, after that theology which is distin- guished by what is called a *mystical* cast. With this result, however, was joined no satisfaction of the deep spiritual thirst within him; his study of the infancy of Christianity supplied no machinery for working out its ideal in his own nature; and the cares and interests of a small parish presented nothing that could fill up the

void within. It was in this state of mind that, in 1740, he was introduced by a younger brother to some of the Moravians, who were at that time in England, and in intercourse with them he found for the first time an entire response to the long unsatisfied demands of his spirit. He joined them in 1741, and was consecrated a bishop in their Church in 1754, having reluctantly, and in spite of urgent remonstrance from his bishop and the patron of the living, given it up in 1742.

He was very anxious that this step should not be construed into any separation from the Church of England. Nothing in the ritual or Articles of that Church had lost its hold upon him, nor did he find its form of ecclesiastical government in any respect oppressive. He sought a bond of fellowship, a social framework, which the Anglican system appeared to him neither to supply nor exclude, and which, therefore, he wished simply to add to the bonds of Church membership. 'I do not go from you because I cannot live in the Church of England,' he said, in an address to his parishioners before quitting Stanton Harcourt, which is of importance with reference to those two bodies, Moravians and Methodists, which at that day the Church forced into an attitude of dissent; 'the inducement which leads me to this change is the great concern I have for a happy state of mind, and to compass this end no means, through the blessing of God, appear to me so proper as a free intercourse with those who are of the same principles with my own' (the grammar is Gambold's), 'to whom I may communicate my thoughts without reserve, and from whom I can receive that assistance of advance

and comfort which is necessary for a person encompassed with such infirmities as I am.' The last words are significant. The slight degree to which Gambold was anxious to separate from his brother Churchmen (if separation it can be called) was avowedly based on his inferiority to them. This apologetic tone in one of the foremost representatives of a body reluctantly forced to become a sect should not be forgotten when we estimate the position of the English Moravians.

Gambold's subsequent career, which was occupied by a devoted attention to the affairs of the society he had joined, presents no point of general interest. He died in 1771, of a long and tedious illness, borne with great patience. He seems to have been of a peculiarly gentle and retiring temper of mind, to have awakened much love and no hatred. His writings have been gathered into a small volume, valuable chiefly to the historian of thought, but not without some gleams of poetic feeling. Some passages are interesting as part of his biography. In a tragedy on the martyrdom of Ignatius, two of his deacons are represented as disputing respecting martyrdom, and afterwards reconciled by Polycarp, whose verdict on their differences we may imagine as representing the view which Gambold would take of his differences with Wesley:—

'Judge not each other any more, my sons.  
 Each has his province. Thou, Agathopus,  
 Of make impetuous, and by grace divine  
 Upright in faith, and full of Christian fervour,  
 Art destined to convert: thou shalt display  
 And strike the drowsy world with the strong blaze  
 Of Christ's religion, and its true demand.  
 Philo shall follow thee, by nature formed  
 To be a comforter, and glean up those

Not yet so firmly bound up in those bundles,  
Nor marked illustriously the elect of God.'

And the self-depreciation of the gentler and more tolerant disciple, in the following address to him who is equally ready to endure or inflict martyrdom, and who blames as infidelity the absence of desire for it, is even more interesting, as expressing the tenderness of the writer for that side with which he had least sympathy :—

'Thou hast thy path,  
And that as much more excellent than mine  
As the bright sun exceeds the sickly moon ;  
For all the strong in faith, who snatch the prime  
Of Gospel grace, and its meridian fires,  
Are thine, while I the inglorious crowd befriend  
Who creep benighted in the rear of hope !'

The whole tone of gentle, uncontentious pleading with which, in the next extract, Ignatius justifies his Church, has still more analogy to the Moravian attitude :—

'True it is,  
We differ somewhat in our form of life  
From other men. And singularity,  
If needless and fantastic, has no comfort  
When public hatred frowns. Nor would that scheme  
Deserve the stress of suffering zeal, whose worth  
Lay in fine notions, but would not relieve  
With real strength the labouring heart, nor alter,  
By operation deep, our wretched being.  
But if, by seal of God and true experience  
Of some few happy souls, a doctrine stands  
Commended as the medicine of our nature,  
Then sure, amidst the anger of such minds,  
Amidst all dangers of the friendly teacher,  
It must be taught.'

The concluding words are more valuable, probably, as a picture of the eighteenth than of the third



century. The reader will understand their import in the first character when he comes to estimate the position of the body which Gambold joined; but, amid the extravagance and intolerance with which the whole revival was associated, it is refreshing to come upon words indicating so temperate and yet so firm an attitude towards all who are without the circle of sympathy with their writer, as those just quoted. Perhaps a larger claim may be made for the following extract, proceeding as it does from a view of Nature so far in advance of any other thinker whose name is mentioned in this chapter; and, with the exception of William Law, of any of Gambold's cotemporaries.

'Miracles,' he says, 'were such single instances' (of God's dealing with man) 'as by their peculiar evidence were intended to serve for a key to a thousand less clear; such uncommon events as were designed to explain what is called the common course of nature—they were calculated to claim on the part of God that regular and continual agency which He has in the elementary motions and sublunary events.

'However common it is, it must ever be atheism to term any event *natural*, with the intent to deny that it is *divine*. . . . Nor let any reasoner flatter himself that this is a system only for those who believe in a Bible. It is impossible to conceive any religion at all . . . any trust, resignation, or gratitude towards the Deity, upon any other foundation. For what a dreary void are we left in, what a sullen and total suspense of all those sweetest emotions of the soul towards its Maker, which are to it what respiration is to the body, the moment the least exception is imagined from the general rule that "the finger of

God is in all things." As on the one hand, with respect to such an exceptional instance, there would be no intelligent and gracious Being for us properly to honour, love, and trust in, to supplicate and thank, in that event; so on the other, if but some things—were they ever so few—did come to pass without Him, more might, and then why not all?'

The ideas indicated by those words have now become common property, and the reader to whom that dreary antithesis of God and 'mere nature,' characteristic of Wesley and his cotemporaries, is not familiar, will hardly appreciate the originality of mind manifested by them at the time they were spoken.

This sketch of a character which to the present writer is more interesting than any other of the Oxford Methodists will be fitly concluded by the epitaph, expressing less the aims of an individual life than the ideal for humanity, which Gambold wrote for himself. The poetic feeling implied in it is not so much the result of any originative power, as of that deep sense of the Infinite which raises all natures to a level with the poet:—

'Ask not, who ended here his span?  
His name, reproach, and praise, was man.  
Did no great deeds adorn his course?  
No deed of his but showed him worse:  
One thing was great, which God supplied,  
He suffered human life—and died.  
What points of knowledge did he gain?  
That life was sacred all—and vain:  
Sacred, how high; and vain, how low?  
He knew not here, but died to know.'

## CHAPTER IV.

### WESLEY IN AMERICA.

WESLEY'S sojourn in the region where his influence appears to have been exercised most unmixedly for good was not ended by any choice of his own. Like almost every other important action of his life, his quitting Oxford was a change wholly unsought by himself, and was indeed at variance with his most distinct intentions, expressed in a long letter to his father, written at the close of 1734, in answer to one urging him to apply for a presentation of the living in the event of the writer's death. The elder Wesley had written with a natural but hardly avowed anxiety to preserve to his family their early home after his death, and with a strong desire, which would better bear being put forward, to leave the people among whom he had laboured to the care of his son; and he had supplemented these wishes by some weak arguments against a college life. These arguments were the only part of the letter which John noticed in his reply, and he maintained that—'There is scarcely any way of doing good to our fellow-creatures for which here is not daily occasion.

Here are poor to be relieved, children to be educated, workhouses and prisons to be visited; and lastly, here are the schools of the prophets, here are tender minds to be formed and strengthened. Of these in particular we must observe, that he who gains only one, does thereby as much service to the world as he could do in a parish in his whole life, for his name is legion; in him are contained all those that shall be converted by him.' In those words Wesley fully justifies his clinging to our great University—a clinging so strangely at variance with the future that awaited him. An Oxford tutor of the eighteenth century who should have sent forth Christians would have achieved a work which we cannot compare with that appointed for the great revival of religion in the middle class, because it is impossible to say how far the extent of influence compensates for its intensity. Mr. Wesley, however, seems to have been utterly bewildered by his son's lecture. 'Though I am no more fond of the gripping and wrangling distemper than of boluses and clysters (for age would have rest),' he writes to his son Samuel, not without a certain appropriateness of allusion to John's thorny logic; 'I sat myself down to try if I could unravel his sophisms, and hardly one of his assertions appeared to me to be universally true.' He had, he goes on to say, done what he could, 'with such a shattered head and body, to satisfy the scruples which your brother has raised against my proposal, from conscience and duty,'—but wishes his son Samuel to add his endeavours to achieve this purpose. The correspondence that ensued exhibits the good temper and good feeling of both brothers, which bore unhurt that crucial test of

affection, a long and futile argument. It appears, however, from an obscure sentence in a letter of Charles Wesley's, that John did at last make an unsuccessful and reluctant application for the living. A few months later, a letter from Charles, April 30, 1735, describes their father's serene and joyous death:—"You had reason to envy us, who could attend my father in the last stage of his illness. The few words he could utter I saved, and hope never to forget. "The weaker I am in body, the more strong and sensible support I feel from God." . . . He often laid his hand upon my head and said, "Be steady. *The Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom; you shall see it, though I shall not.*"

'On my asking him whether he did not find himself worse, he replied, "Oh, my Charles, I feel a great deal; God chastens me with strong pain, but I praise Him for it: I thank Him for it: I love Him for it!"'

Nor was it only towards this gentle and tender son that these utterances brought the assurance of unhurt sympathy. If for a moment the cold response of his elder son had brought a chill into their relation, it was soon forgotten. More than once in his last illness he uttered words of satisfaction and peace which John then did not enter into. 'The inward witness, son—the inward witness—that is the strongest proof of Christianity.' It is a significant indication of the state of Christianity in that day that Wesley, in quoting these words of his father's long years after,—words which at the present day sound so commonplace,—adds, 'But I did not at that time understand him.'

But if John escaped this summons from his beloved Oxford seclusion, another soon presented itself, this

time not to be rejected. The commonplace view that ambition was a ruling motive with him is again singularly discountenanced by his behaviour: it was no brilliant prospect which outweighed in his eyes the active obscurity in which he hoped to pass his life. An impulse towards missionary life seems to have been an heirloom in the Wesley family; it had been manifested both by the father and grandfather of John: and when in 1735 a chance of preaching to the heathen presented itself in an offer from General Oglethorpe to return with him as parish priest to Georgia, a newly-founded colony of which he was the first governor, this aspiration reached its goal.

The connection of the Wesleys with this remarkable man is sufficiently important to admit of a few introductory words respecting one who has hardly succeeded to all the fame we should have imagined attendant on the friend of Johnson, the patron of the Wesleys, the founder of the youngest of our American colonies, and 'the delightful old beau' of Hannah More. James Oglethorpe, a fine chivalrous character, was the son of a Sir Theophilus Oglethorpe, of Godalming, and an Irish mother, who transmitted to him, to judge from his subsequent career, not a few of those characteristics generally ascribed to her countrymen. A patron of literature, a soldier, a philanthropist, a legislator, his long career contains a wonderfully various exercise of mental activity, and it is no small praise to describe a life so full of adventure as remote from all that we associate with the name of an adventurer. At forty, he had the experience of several average lives; he had been at Oxford, and in the English army; he

had, under Prince Eugene, taken part in battles which after nearly half a century he retraced with undimmed memory for the benefit of Warton and Johnson; and, still young, he had succeeded to the calmer occupations of a country gentleman and member of Parliament. Here his efforts were unwearied against whatever bore to him the aspect of injustice and oppression. His parliamentary career, which commenced with a protest against the banishment of Atterbury, was chiefly illustrated by a foreshadowing of the labours of Howard. The state of the prisons at his day is one that vividly impresses on us the lateness at which a nation arrives at that sensibility to suffering which we are apt to consider a quality essential to humanity. No criminal of any grade is now punished as was a debtor in the last century. Oglethorpe's sympathies, first kindled by the sufferings of a friend in the Fleet, were not extinguished with the misfortune that excited them; he brought the perpetrators of the atrocities committed in these prisons before a parliamentary committee, celebrated alike by pen and pencil. Thomson, with better feeling than poetry, describes

‘ The generous band,  
Who, touched by human woe, redressive searched  
Into the horrors of the gloomy gaol,  
Where misery moans unpitied and unheard,  
Where sickness pines, where thirst and hunger burn,  
And poor misfortune feels the lash of vice !’

And Hogarth, with more graphic power, depicts the skulking gaoler cowering before the committee, while his half-naked victim points out the instruments of torture which had possessed so dreadful a

significance for him. The misery which Oglethorpe witnessed drove him to seek not alleviation merely, but cure. He resolved to give the inmates of the Fleet and the Marshalsea scope and subsistence in the forests of the New World; and a large tract of fertile and well-watered land to the south of South Carolina, over which the jurisdiction of England was still merely nominal, afforded him the opportunity. Funds for this purpose were not entirely wanting. The Wesleys were preceded in their missionary attempts by one of the greatest Englishmen of the eighteenth century. George Berkeley, inspired by the hope of bringing to Christianity a race endowed by the opinion of the day with primitive virtue, had left the brilliant future which awaited him in Europe, to dedicate the remainder of his life to the instruction of the colonists and the conversion of the natives. Like his very different successor, he crossed the Atlantic in a few years, baffled and disappointed; and the College he had designed remained a mere dream. The glow of those anticipations with which he turned to the New World, too wide to be dimmed by any mere personal disappointment, survives for us in the well-known lines, the only verses he is known to have written.

‘In happy climes, the seat of innocence,  
Where nature guides and virtue rules,  
Where men shall not impose for truth and sense  
The pedantry of courts and schools’—

—he goes on to anticipate, with a fervour of hope that supplies all poetic gifts, ‘another golden age,’ to which, in the decadence of an old civilization, he turned with the prophetic eye of genius, and the



fallacious associations of his day. He and Wesley had both to learn that civilization had no monopoly of vice, and that one might escape from the 'pedantry of courts and schools' without discovering the 'rule of virtue,' and 'the guidance of nature.'

The money intended for the College lying idle, and being needed for an object not very different from that for which it had been designed, Oglethorpe obtained from Berkeley the permission to apply to Parliament for this diversion of the fund. This public grant was seconded by private charity: the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts—then almost the only member of that family of religious societies which has since increased so enormously—took up the cause, and the colony, richly endowed, was erected by charter from George II., June 19th, 1732, into the province of Georgia, and given for twenty-one years into the government of trustees, whose common seal, a group of silkworms, with the motto, '*Non sibi, sed aliis,*' was no unfit symbol of the interest of men who accepted this charge solely for the good of those they were to govern, and refused to derive from it any emolument for themselves. Although their regulations for the new colony do not exhibit much political wisdom, we could gladly have learnt that these remained in force, with all their mistakes, for the sake of one by which slavery was forbidden. This measure was based on grounds of mere expediency, but it is evident that nobler than prudential motives weighed with Oglethorpe in his prohibition of a practice which he declares to be 'against the Gospel, as well as the fundamental law of England. We refused,' he

continues, 'as trustees, to make a law permitting such a horrid crime.'

It was on his return to England from the first visit to his colony, bringing with him a party of Indians, that Oglethorpe persuaded the Wesleys to become his companions on his next voyage. One of the most remarkable characteristics of the eighteenth century is the curious hankering after savage life which was stimulated and gratified by the visits of the natives of our American empire, in whom the men of that time saw the ideal from which civilization had foolishly departed. At this time, the virtuous Indian incarnates for the critic his views on the errors and follies of society, or serves by his truth and simplicity to heighten the sordid perfidy of English civilized life; and the striking and refining effect of an isolated fragment of barbarism on a margin of civilization would be heightened by much that was inherent in this picturesque race. Especially in the case of Tomo Chichi, the chief who accompanied Oglethorpe to England, there was a certain combination of dignity and simplicity very imposing to the imaginations of that time. The appearance of this old chief and his retinue created a considerable sensation in England, and attentions were showered upon them from all classes of the community. They were very eager to be allowed to go to court in their ordinary costume, which was meagre; Oglethorpe, however, persuaded them to follow European customs in this respect, and they appeared resplendent in scarlet and gold, while their faces, some half black, others with black arrows instead of whiskers, must have effectually debarred any danger of too much similarity resulting from this

deference to European notions. Their chief presented the King with the feathers of an eagle, 'the emblems,' he informed him, 'of peace in our land, which we have brought to leave with you, O great king, as a pledge of everlasting peace.' The King, we are told, made a gracious reply, but we should imagine that the contrast in point of dignity and grace between the American monarch and George II. was such as to encourage the eighteenth-century view of savage life. This view must also have been strengthened by the chief's fine manners at his interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury, at which, finding that their host declined, although very weak, to receive him sitting, he begged to receive his blessing only, and keep all he had to say for a subordinate, to whom he expressed his desire that some good person should be sent among them to instruct their youth. Prince William—afterwards Duke of Cumberland, the 'butcher' of Culloden notoriety, now a lad of fourteen—presented a young chief with a watch, accompanied by the admonition 'to call upon Jesus Christ every morning when he looked upon it,' which he promised to do. A quaint symbol of the Christian religion, and a singular missionary to preach it! Oglethorpe, who lingered behind his *protégés* was very anxious for some efficient instruments for this end. He was already acquainted with the family of the Wesleys, having been the largest subscriber to the principal work of their father (a Commentary on Job), and a benefactor to the family in other ways, gratefully acknowledged by the elder Wesley in a letter written shortly before his death. The effect produced by his first meeting with the son must have been altogether favourable, as a proposal

to accompany the Governor on his return to Georgia was the immediate result. Wesley's first answer was a refusal, the obstacle being the necessity of leaving his mother. 'I am,' he said—and it is the only instance of his wishes being influenced by personal feeling—'the staff of her age, her support, and comfort.' She was the Spartan in this case. 'Had I twenty sons,' she said when she was told of his hesitation, 'I should rejoice that they were so employed, though I should never see them more.' This permission and the reiterated urgency of the Trustees overcame Wesley's reluctance, and a letter from one of the latter (Dr. Burton) of September 18th contains an expression of warm satisfaction at his decision, accompanied by recommendations which would have changed all Wesley's career if he had acted upon them. 'You will keep in view the pattern of that Gospel preacher St. Paul, who became all things to all men, if by any means he might gain some. Here is a nice trial of Christian prudence. . . . In every case you will distinguish between what is essential and what is merely circumstantial to Christianity. I say this,' he goes on with almost prophetic insight, 'because men are apt to deceive themselves in such cases, and singularities of less importance are often espoused with more zeal than the weighty matters of God's law. As in all points we love ourselves, so especially in our hypotheses. Where a man has, as it were, a property in a notion, he is most industrious to improve it, and that in proportion to the labour of thought he has bestowed upon it; and as its value rises in imagination we are more unwilling to give it up, and dwell upon it more pertinaciously than upon considerations

of greater necessity and use.' Then, as if aware that these hints had been perhaps too much pointed by suspicions which experience hardly yet justified, he adds a graceful apology for his freedom: 'I write in haste what occurs to my thoughts.

"Yet hear what thy unskilful friend may say."<sup>1</sup>

May God prosper your endeavours for the propagation of His Gospel.'

If these suggestions were really evoked by any perception of their special necessity for the mind to which they were addressed, we can only accept the fact that Dr. Burton urged the undertaking on Wesley as evidence of the barrenness of a time in which disinterested zeal was rare enough to be enlisted at any price. Some of Wesley's friends took a very different view of the proposed journey; and one of them sent him a remonstrance which drew from him an elaborate justification of his enterprise, worth inserting here.

'I hope,' he tells his friend, 'to learn the true sense of the Gospel of Christ, by preaching it to the heathen. They have no comments to construe away the text, no vain philosophy to corrupt it, no luxurious, sensual, covetous, ambitious expounders to soften its unpleasing truths. They are as little children, humble, willing to learn, and eager to do the will of God, and consequently they shall know of every doctrine I preach, whether it be of God. By these, therefore, I hope to learn the purity of that faith which was once delivered to the saints, the genuine sense and full extent of those laws which

<sup>1</sup> Hor. Ep. i. 17, 3.

none can understand who mind earthly things.' Wesley's high anticipations of his future converts found vent in so glowing a description of the ideal Indian to a friend, that she exclaimed, 'Why, Mr. Wesley, if they are all this already, what more can Christianity do for them?' It is curious to observe through such different media the same fictitious ideal. Alexander Pope and John Wesley, one would have thought, could hardly, where error is so infinite, have stumbled on the same kind of delusion. But the spirit of an age is a common factor in its most opposite specimens; and just as we all, whatever our individual movement, move ceaselessly from west to east, so in the eighteenth century the most opposite desires sought their ideal in a life remote from that of an old civilization.

No sooner had the Wesleys embarked on their voyage to Georgia, in October 1735, than they took up again the regular and methodical life they had led at Oxford. The day was apportioned out between prayer, the Bible, and study, no interval being left for recreation of any kind, and every social meeting being for the purpose of instruction and exhortation. This framework was filled in with habits of ascetic monotony and self-restraint which must have extorted the respect of all their companions, and with Oglethorpe their first intercourse seems to have been entirely satisfactory. The courteous and chivalrous gentleman was much impressed by that dignity which is always given by such zeal as theirs; and once, when some of the officers on board manifested an opposite feeling, they drew down upon themselves a sharp rebuke from the fiery soldier. 'What do you mean,

sirs? Do you take these gentlemen for tithe-pi parsons? They are gentlemen of learning and respectability—they are my friends; and whoever offers an affront to them insults me.'

Another incident of the voyage, if we may accept it as true, forcibly illustrates the character of the two men. Wesley one day heard the Governor storming away in his cabin, and opening the door to know what was the matter found him in a furious passion with his Italian servant, who stood quaking before him. 'You must excuse me, Mr. Wesley,' he accosted his visitor; 'I have met with a provocation which is too great for man to bear.' A hearer with any sense of the ludicrous would have suppressed a smile as he heard that this provocation was the dishonesty of his servant, who had drunk up all his favourite Cyprus wine. 'But I will be revenged—he shall be tied hand and foot and carried to the man-of-war. The rascal should have taken care how he served me so, for I never forgive.' 'Then I hope, sir,' said Wesley, calmly, 'that you never sin.' The words, we may believe, came from the better part of Wesley's nature, for Oglethorpe was at once subdued; and with the fitful, and perhaps somewhat theatrical generosity which characterized him, he took his keys from his pocket, flung them at his servant, exclaiming, 'There, villain, take my keys, and behave better for the future.' A recent biographer of Oglethorpe, from whose work many details are here taken, has questioned the accuracy of this anecdote, which rests solely on Wesley's own authority, and indeed produced evidence that it could not have taken place as narrated by him. But conceding a good margin

for the inaccuracy of Wesley's memory, which is apparent elsewhere, we need not give up an anecdote he would not have invented, and which fits in so accurately with all other evidence about the two men. The generous, impetuous soldier is so distinct there—we are reminded in the sudden transition of Dr. Johnson's 'Oglethorpe, sir, never finishes what he has to say ;' while the directness and courage of Wesley's rebuke go so far to explain the result which he produced, that the little dialogue is retained here as a probably authentic specimen of the intercourse of two remarkable men.

Wesley's voyage to America was the occasion of an acquaintance even more important in its results on his future life than that with Oglethorpe. The United Brethren, generally known to the English reader as the sect of Moravians, is sometimes said to be founded by Count Zinzendorf, though, to quote his own words, 'our Church is the most ancient of all the Protestant Churches, if not their common mother.' The Brethren may, indeed, look back with pride to the Reformation as a period when, having already survived the ordeal of persecution without, and the still more serious trial of dissension within, they gave encouragement to the most illustrious of the Reformers by their sympathy, and the approbation of Luther sets a seal to the venerable antiquity of their faith. Their connection with England begins in the seventeenth century ; the Hanover succession was of course an encouraging influence, and an importation from this body of German Protestants was eagerly welcomed to the colony which was founded with views of such sincere, if not always enlightened, philanthropy. The same kind of yearning as that



awakened by an ideal savage life found satisfaction in this Protestant monasticism. We shall find in almost every age that side by side with the predominant tendencies of the time there is a reactionary impulse which, when the attention is exclusively turned to its effects, seems to render false all that has been said of the spirit of the age. Thus, the eighteenth century was rationalistic, and the cool mysticism of these monks of Protestantism afforded a welcome shade from the prosaic aridity of rationalism. The eighteenth century was destructive, unorganic, individualizing, and the Moravian brotherhood presented an organic life in which no member could feel himself alone. We need no other explanation of the great progress which, during the latter part of this century, they made in England. It is not, of course, asserted that reflections like these touch the source of their influence over Wesley, which was simpler and more intelligible. Their ideal of a high Christianity was during the voyage manifested in the most opposite directions. 'Of their humility,' says Wesley, 'they had given a continual proof, by performing those servile offices for the other passengers which none of the English would undertake, for which they would receive no pay. Every day had given them occasion of showing a meekness which no injury could move. If they were pushed or struck they went away, but no complaint was found in their mouth.' The passive side of Christian virtue was here manifested in its highest beauty. An opportunity was not wanting to judge of it in the active direction. One evening a violent storm came on; the ship staggered and shook beneath the blows of the waves, a great shock about every ten

minutes seemed to threaten the immediate shattering of every plank in the vessel. One great wave flooded the ship, poured in between the decks, and roused for the moment the fear that the ship was sinking. The Germans, who were singing a psalm, finished it without any sign of alarm, notwithstanding the shrieks of the English, who imagined themselves about to founder. The contrast struck Wesley deeply. 'Were not you or the women and children afraid?' he asked afterwards. 'No, we are not afraid to die,' was the calm answer.

Wesley looked upon religion altogether as a preparation for death, and the courage which confronted this issue without shrinking formed perhaps a larger element in his conception of the Christian character than that serene meekness with which it is seldom joined. Whatever the spiritual worth of such feelings, a storm at sea must be a wonderful test of their presence. Much unreality often mingles itself with a fancied desire to die, and a longing for some rest deeper than any earthly slumber assumes the aspect of a readiness for that change in which we have no reason to suppose the gain will be repose. Such delusions, encouraged by the quiet bed and group of tender watchers, are dispelled amid the incessant noise and movement of a storm at sea; and, all adventitious associations swept away, the issue is put clearly—Is the summons welcome? Wesley recoiled from it. His mind was deeply exercised in the discovery of his own reluctance, the sight of a feeling so opposite in the mind of the Germans made them an object of his deepest interest, and from this time they stood to him in the position of spiritual directors. The

account of this growing union with them is almost the only incident recorded in his journal of the voyage. It is singularly barren of any allusion to natural objects. A notice of the appearance called by the ancients Castor and Pollux, 'a small ball of white fire like a star on each of the masts,' a tribute to the grandeur of the rugged rocks of the Needles at one end of the voyage, and the agreeable prospect of the pine-woods skirting the Savannah river at the other, are the sole indications afforded us that the journalist was crossing the ocean for the first time.

About seventeen miles up this river was the town of the same name, which was to form the parish of John Wesley. It had at this time been built barely two years, but the rows of small plank buildings, with shingled roofs and unplanned sides, would take but a short time to erect, and already the streets and squares presented an appearance of regularity, while the rows of trees which lined their sides must have given the little town the aspect of belonging to the forest recently cleared to make way for it. Situated on a high bluff or table-land above the river, the bank which sloped towards it and the alluvial ground at the bottom offered a favourable situation for a public garden, filled with English hot-house plants, the principal space being reserved for large squares of mulberry trees, whence it was hoped that the silkworms which had been chosen emblems of the Colonial Government would in time supply the British loom and clothe the British court. This attempt, however, was from the first attended with great difficulty, and ended in entire failure; a humbler section of society was destined to owe its clothing to the produce of

this distant colony, which became the largest cotton-growing state in the Union.

The first impression of Georgia was, to the Wesleys, altogether gratifying. The flat sandy plain which edges the coast is indeed devoid of those features of interest by which our modern taste for the picturesque would be gratified, but the richness of vegetation presented a charm more readily appreciated, the woods of pine and evergreen oak afforded the eyes of the traveller a refreshing verdure in the midst of winter, and later on in the spring these woods must have been gorgeous with bloom and interesting from the animal life which abounds there. But the change from winter to summer was little noted by one absorbed in the unseen, and the slight notice which follows is the only sign of any interest in the outward aspect of the New World during Wesley's whole sojourn there. 'The place is pleasant beyond description,' Wesley writes to his mother soon after his arrival, 'and by all I can learn, exceedingly healthful, even in summer, for those who are not intemperate.' The meeting with Spangenberg, a Moravian pastor, who came to meet the Germans, was an event that quite threw into the shade the aspect of a new world. Wesley hastened to avail himself of such an opportunity, and was somewhat surprised at the preliminary catechism which was considered necessary. 'My brother,' he was asked, in words which must have recalled those of old Samuel Wesley, 'I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness within yourself that you are a child of God?' Then, observing Wesley's hesitation, 'Do you know Jesus

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Christ?' 'I know He is the Saviour of the world,' replied Wesley. 'But do you know He has saved you?' 'I hope He has died to save me.' This would not satisfy Spangenberg, who pressed him with the further question, somewhat ambiguous as he has recorded it for us, 'Do you know yourself?' Wesley returned a faint affirmative, which he records with a fear that it was untrue, and when the conversation was renewed he became a catechist, and drew from his new friend an autobiography which, though it would hardly have that effect on the reader, must have impressed Wesley deeply. He was, according to his subsequent decision, not at this time a Christian—his heart, according to Spangenberg's phraseology, had never yet been 'overturned'—and, fresh from the experience of that fear of death which he accepted as a test of an unregenerate condition, he was, we may be sure, eager to grasp at any explanation of this superiority in the Moravians. The sympathy between them touched only the single crisis of conversion, and had no root in any permanent condition of the soul. But it was very strong at first; and, in America, it was strong even at last. After quitting the ship (Feb. 1736) he lodged in the same house with them, and in the observation for which opportunity was thus afforded him he found evidence of the spirit which had impressed him in all the details of practical life. It was still further illustrated by the election and ordination of a bishop which took place about this time. 'The great simplicity, as well as solemnity of the whole,' he writes, 'made me almost forget the 1700 years between, and imagine myself in one of those assemblies where form and state were not, but

Paul the tent-maker, or Peter the fisherman, presided, yet with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.'

It is curious to watch the sympathy with a body eminently the reverse of ecclesiastical forming itself beneath a rigid crust of High Church feeling, not only unbroken by it, but never, to all appearance, harder than in the period which coincides with this reception of Moravian influence. Wesley's attention, on first entering on his ministerial duties, seems to have been chiefly occupied in arranging every detail of Christian ritual according to the literal directions of the Prayer-book. One of these details had then been the subject of some discussion in the public prints of that day—the manner of Baptism—and Wesley expended some energy and doubtless wasted not a little influence in his efforts to enforce his own views. The last extract from his journal stands in significant contrast with one of a few days previous, which informs us that he baptized a sick baby 'according to the custom of the first Church, and the Church of England, by immersion,' and that 'from that hour the child recovered.' On another occasion the mother refused either to permit the ceremony or certify that the child was weak. This priestly disciplinarianism showed itself in other directions. One of the holiest men in the colony was repelled from the Communion as a dissenter, and the dislike which blazed up later on evidently began to accumulate from the very first manifestation of Wesley's zeal for an authority which at no time was less willingly recognized than in the early part of this century, and which in hardly any place could be enforced with more inconvenience than in a newly-established

colony. Georgia was destined to be the scene of Wesley's High Church experiment; that it should also be the origin of his close connection with a body of men whom the Church of England could only recognize as a set of Dissenters, is explicable by the fact that the Moravian Church, as an order and not a sect, did actually possess that discipline which Wesley thought he saw exemplified in the Church of England, and was not distinguished from that Church by any other important distinction. There was, therefore, no inconsistency in Wesley's High Church principles and his Moravianism, as far as the latter was carried in America.

A few lines will comprise all Wesley's endeavours after his object in crossing the Atlantic—the evangelization of the Indians. Tomo Chichi, the old chief who had visited the British court, came on board to visit him before he had quitted the ship; and during the summer they had a long conference with some of the Chicasaws. The account of the interview is full of interest; but this is entirely due to the words of the Indians—Wesley wisely appears as a mere querist. The Chicasaw creed is not without a certain poetic beauty of its own. 'We believe,' said the spokesman, 'that there are four beloved things—the clouds, the sun, the clear sky, and he that lives in the clear sky. We think of them always wherever we are. We talk of them and to them, at home and abroad, in peace, in war, and after the fight, and wherever and whenever we meet together.' Their belief that 'He that lived in the clear sky had two with him—three in all'—one cannot but take to imply some reminiscence of Christian teaching. Whether he was the creator of the rest,

they could not tell; 'who hath seen?'—but they believed he made man. They were ignorant whether he loved him. They did not doubt his power to save them from their enemies, but knew not if He would exercise it. 'The Beloved Ones' were accustomed to signalize their presence by many mysterious noises, the account of which seemed to arouse great interest to the catechist; perhaps some recollection of Old Jeffery dictated his questions about them. 'Have you often heard such noises? What are they like?' he asked eagerly, and was told that they were like drums and guns and shouting. In answering his questions on the state of the soul after death, the Indian informed Wesley that the souls of black men walked up and down near the place where they died, 'for we have often heard cries and noises near the place where any prisoners have been burned.' To Wesley's offer of a book that would tell them many things about the Beloved Ones above, they returned a faint answer. They were now occupied with war; if ever a more convenient season came, they would hear him. Yet they seem to have felt a certain amount of sympathy with the Christians. The interpreter told Wesley that they had said they knew what he was doing at the funeral of a young girl who had died lately—he had been speaking to the Beloved Ones to take up her soul. They believed also, they told Oglethorpe, that the time would come when the black and white man would be one. There is one other passage which, if it does not indicate Christian teaching, is full of interest. 'There are but a few whom the Beloved One teaches from a child, and is in them, and takes care of them, and



teaches them. They know these things, and our old men practise, therefore they know; but I do not practise, therefore I do not know.'

This, with one trifling exception, was the sole conference which Wesley ever had with any members of the race he had crossed the Atlantic to convert. The real Indians in this dialogue are not so extremely unlike his ideal Indians as we should expect; but the glowing expectations he had brought with him were chilled, not so much by this dialogue as by what he heard and saw of them besides. The 'little children eager to learn and anxious to do the will of God,' were described by him before he left America in the following words:—'They have no religion, no laws, no civil government. They are all, except perhaps the Choctaws, liars, gluttons, drunkards, thieves, dissemblers. They are implacable, unmerciful, murderers of fathers, murderers of their own children—it being a common thing for a son to shoot his father or mother because they are old and past labour, and for a woman to throw her child into the next river because she will go with her husband to the war.' Such was the harsh contrast of anticipation and experience!

Oglethorpe and Wesley seem not to have entirely understood each other as to the object of his journey. He had come to America to preach to the Indians. Oglethorpe designed for him the position, wholly incompatible with this, of parish priest at Savannah. He made several attempts to leave Savannah for an expedition among them, which were precluded by the impossibility of finding a substitute for his duties there; but what is most noteworthy in this failure is the reason he gives for it, that he could not find any

Indians on the continent of America who had the least desire of being instructed ! There were about as many Indians in America desirous of being instructed in the Christian religion, we presume, as there were colliers in Kingswood or miners in Cornwall in that state of mind. But the evil influence of delusion survives delusion ; the mind when it awakens from misconception cannot take up the position of mere ignorance, but recoils to an attitude equally unfavourable for correct judgment or effective action. It was well in this case that it was so ; Wesley was destined to preach Christianity to heathens quite as savage as the Chicasaw Indians, and more accessible to his teaching

The rest of Wesley's two years' ministry in Georgia does not demand a much larger space here. It was by no means unimportant. His whole after-history is affected by the events of these two years. But the events may be told in a few words, and the influence will be better seen in his subsequent life. The zeal which burnt on undimmed to the end of eighty years of wanderings was already fully kindled, and we may believe not without result. It must have been impossible to misinterpret the fervency of his desire to save the souls of those entrusted to his care. His own simple and ascetic method of life must have been a complete deliverance from those smaller aims which entangle and sully so many religious lives ; while dry bread was his only food, and the scorching mid-day of a sub-tropical summer was chosen by him as the opportunity of visiting his parishioners, because it was the time they could not leave their houses, they must have been impressed with the rare spectacle of a character free from all that diverts energy of will from

few and large objects, and his sojourn here was not devoid of all fruit from such impressions. His Oxford habits reappeared in other particulars than his asceticism. 'The more serious' were formed into a little society which met once or twice a week in order to 'reprove, instruct, and exhort one another,' on the model of the Oxford Methodists, and even the less serious received his distinct rebuke with that gratitude which is the most unmistakeable tribute to its spirit. But, on the whole, the Georgian ministry of the Wesleys was a failure, of which the causes are not difficult to discover; they had come out to preach not Christianity, but sacerdotalism. One of the charges brought against him at his departure—for an illogical dislike had rated together the most inconsistent charges—was, that he had baptized an Indian's child with only two sponsors. 'This, I own, was wrong,' he says in his comment upon it; 'for I ought at all hazards to have refused baptizing it till a third was produced.' One whose mind is much exercised on such duties cannot, it is evident, enforce with full effect others of larger import. We must level the hills to fill up the valleys, and he who has expended his influence on trifles has closed the ears of all hearers worth having against the wisest exhortations from his lips.

John was not the first of the brothers to discover his failure. Charles, who had gone out as secretary to Oglethorpe, and had been appointed to the ministry of Frederica, a small town seventy miles south of Savannah, was, from the same kind of cause, even less happy than his brother in his pastoral efforts. Within the first month of his ministry the discontent he had

provoked among his violent and servile parishioners issued in a plot to get rid of him by ruining him in the eyes of the Governor. He was accused of mutiny and sedition, in inciting people to leave the colony. The charge was, however, unsupported by any evidence, and dwindled down on examination into one which we are rather surprised to find equally baseless—that he had forced the people to come to prayers. ‘The people will acquit me of that,’ said Charles, and Oglethorpe desired the whole matter might be dropped. ‘I will not ask who the people are if they will but be quiet,’ said the Governor. ‘I hope they will be quiet, and so does Mr. Wesley.’ ‘Yes, I believe it of Mr. Wesley,’ said his late accuser; ‘I had always a great respect for him.’ ‘Yes,’ exclaimed Oglethorpe, sarcastically, ‘you had a very great respect for him; you told me he was at the bottom of all this disturbance!’ A few days after the pacification, however, Oglethorpe’s mobile nature was roused anew against Charles on an equally unfounded accusation—his having had some hand in the confinement of the doctor, who was put under arrest for having used his gun during church-time on Sunday, an event to which one of the colonists imputed her miscarriage. Oglethorpe was much excited, and his secretary, with some impatience, protested his helplessness in the matter. ‘How is it then,’ cried Oglethorpe, his disappointment breaking out without any judicial disguise, ‘that there is no love, no meekness, no true religion among the people, but instead of this, mere formal prayers?’ Charles did not attempt to account for the absence of any material religion, but informed the Governor he was quite mistaken as to

the presence of any of a formal kind—his morning service had been generally conducted with an audience of about six. ‘What would an unbeliever say to your raising these disorders?’ retorted Oglethorpe, who was no logician, but felt bitterly that he had brought out reputed saints to stir up disorders which he would hardly have anticipated under the ministry of average men; and the meeting ended unsatisfactorily. Shortly afterwards Charles was led to believe that Oglethorpe had shown his displeasure in a manner almost absurd from its pettiness—giving orders to his servant to forbid his secretary the use of a kettle belonging to him. Of course Charles determined to give no further opportunity for this kind of minute insult, and, having depended on the Governor’s furniture and brought none of his own, was reduced to great discomfort. This combination of large and small troubles broke down his health, and he became seriously ill. We can imagine his joy in the midst of this unkindness and neglect which surrounded him, on hearing that the one dearly loved being on the continent of America had come to see him, and when he contrived, leaning on his brother’s arm, to drag himself into the woods out of the hearing of eavesdroppers, he probably enjoyed the first happy moments he had known in his new ministry. ‘I found my brother exceeding ill,’ says Wesley in his journal, ‘but he mended from the moment he saw me.’ He recovered health of body and mind together under the influence of his harder and stronger elder brother, by whom he was persuaded to break a resolution, formed in the morbid state of illness, to starve rather than ask for anything from Oglethorpe. The immediate success

of a request for a few things he wanted plainly indicates the amount of truth in the calumnies he had believed about the Governor.

Oglethorpe was at this time about to start on a southern exploring expedition, in which he expected to meet at the hand of the Spaniards the death which was yet to grant him half a century's reprieve; and he departed from his secretary with something of Eastern state and solemnity. 'I am now going to death; you will see me no more. Take this ring, and carry it from me to Mr. V.' (a Mr. Vernon, one of the Trustees): 'if there be a friend to be depended on, he is one. His interest is next to Sir Robert's; whatever you ask within his power he will do for you, your brother and family.' (Here we may note the profuse exaggerating temper which would not be saved from injustice by any guardedness of belief.) Charles took the ring, with the assertion that he would never make any use of it for himself. 'Life is bitterness to me,' he pursued: 'I came hither to lay it down; I have renounced the world.' It was one of those rare moments when the atmosphere of friendship is suddenly cleared, and two characters come into such entire contact that past misunderstandings recede into oblivion. They parted with the tenderest affection. Oglethorpe took his departure with a romantic enthusiasm which needs a larger issue than that supplied by the event. 'With this sword,' exclaimed he, as he took that received from his father, 'I have never yet been unsuccessful!' When the boat had finally pushed off, he stopped it as he observed his secretary still following its course along the shore, and after some few farewell direc-

tions, called out, 'You have some verses of mine; you see there my thoughts of success.' Thus speaking, he pushed off again, leaving Charles among the pines which edged the water, praying that God might permit them yet to meet again in this world, or, if it might not be, that He would wash away all his sins. The first part of his prayer was very soon granted: Oglethorpe returned in less than a week, with the sword he had girded with so much solemnity still sheathed. Perhaps the memory of the friendship between the impetuous hasty soldier and the scrupulous, and at this time somewhat morbid young clergyman, would have been more perfect if this interview had immediately preceded, as for dramatic effect it ought, the glorious death of the latter; but their final parting on July 26, 1736, when Charles returned to carry Oglethorpe's despatches to the Trustees and the Board of Trade, was still affectionate. When time had done its office in bringing objects into their true proportion, the feeling on both sides was one of kindness. Miss Sarah Wesley, the daughter of Charles, asserts that her father and uncle always referred with reluctance to their Georgian misunderstanding; and the fitful soldier, on the other hand, gave one of his usual graphic demonstrations of his undiminished regard to the Wesleys when, on being in company with the elder brother many years after these events, he went up to him, and kissed his hand. So Oglethorpe went his way to more fighting, with its epilogue of disheartening censure; also, we are glad to think, to more genial life, to the friendship of Johnson and Hannah More, who in her twenty-fourth year triumphs

over having got a new admirer in the old General, who 'perfectly realizes her idea of Nestor,' still in his eightieth year the finest figure she ever saw, heroic, romantic, and full of the old gallantry; to hear the praise of Burke, and to see the colony he had founded the member of an independent State, slurred only by the dark blot from which he had striven in vain to shield it, and which we may well believe at any cost of blood and treasure he would have rejoiced to know at length effaced.

The episode which concluded the Georgian sojourn of the elder brother is not easy to relate clearly. John Wesley was the most veracious of men, but an account resting solely on his evidence is untrustworthy, from his incapacity for judging of evidence,—nowhere so forcibly illustrated as by the discovery of what he was led to believe of General Oglethorpe.

It was soon after his arrival that he became acquainted with and attached to a young lady named Sophia Hopkey, a niece of the chief magistrate of Savannah. According to Wesley's account, she took the initiative in this intimacy, and her assiduities were not without their effect. He determined to submit the question whether to pursue this intimacy into marriage to the decision of the Moravian bishop. 'Will you abide by our decision?' he was asked. That Wesley hesitated only for a moment before giving this promise is, perhaps, an equally strong proof of his deference for his spiritual guides and of the slight hold which all individual feelings possessed on his mind. 'We advise you to proceed no further in this business.' 'The will of the Lord be done,' was his reply.



His journal proves him to have felt as much as it was possible for one of his nature to feel on any merely personal matter. 'When I walked with Mr. Causton to his country lot,' he writes March 7th, 1737, 'I plainly perceived that had God given me such a retirement with the companion I desired I should have forgotten the work for which I was born, and set up my rest in this world.' On the following day Sophia Hopkey engaged herself to Mr. Williamson, and on the 12th of March they were married. 'On this day,' he says elsewhere, 'God being very merciful to me, my friend performed what I could not (*i.e.* to pull out the right eye). What Thou doest, O Lord, I know not now, but I shall know hereafter.' These words, which certainly indicate some strong feeling, also chronicle its abrupt conclusion: we meet with no sign afterwards that it had ever existed. After this the natural thing would be that they should not meet again, and perhaps, if Wesley had been less of a priest, he would have felt that the indications of God's purpose are nowhere more legible than in the impulses which recoil from what seems unfitting. But everything was weak in him, except his desire of saving souls, and the fact that he was Sophia's pastor, much more vivid to him than the recollection that he had been her lover, led him to maintain his former position of Mentor.

In the meantime, the rapid ebb which succeeds a transitory affection was increased apparently by the influence of a hideous calumny, which at first Wesley could not have believed. Some time before this a young woman who had come out in the ship with Oglethorpe, and since married the surgeon, called

upon Wesley, and informed him that the confession she was about to make to him was absolutely necessary to her own peace of mind. After this solemn preface she unfolded to him what no impartial reader can consider in any other light than an invention, motived probably by a desire to embroil the despotic priest and the hasty governor. Sophia Hopkey and herself had been charged by Oglethorpe to exert all their arts upon the young ascetic. 'We were ordered,' she told him, 'to deny you nothing.' The demand for secrecy, with which Wesley of course complied, did not prevent his manifesting some distrust towards the Governor on their next meeting, however; and the very natural annoyance manifested by the generous soldier was interpreted by him, or at least by his biographers, as a sign of conscious guilt. A casual remark to the effect that a particular Indian would shoot any man in the colony for a bottle of rum, and the appearance of this Indian at the window of Wesley's house shortly afterwards, appear, through the same medium, as irrefragable evidence of an intention to intimidate if not to murder him. The biographers of Wesley have passed so lightly over this insinuation that it is necessary here to emphasize to the attention of the reader what it was that he believed of Oglethorpe. The spectacle of a trustfulness which, while it refuses to suspect that the person speaking is capable of a lie, is ready to give credit to any evil in the person spoken of, is not very uncommon, but we seldom find such a specimen as John Wesley affords us. The publication of larger extracts from his

private journal may possibly throw a different light upon the matter, but from the narrative of his accredited biographers it appears that he was ready, on worthless evidence, to believe and perpetuate charges against a man of unblemished honour which we should be slow to believe of the most profligate of mankind.

Mrs. Williamson retained none of the anxiety to conform herself to Wesley's codes which had distinguished Sophia Hopkey; and one day, when he walked home with her from the Communion, in order to 'mention to her some things he thought reprobable in her behaviour,' she broke from him with the exclamation that she did not expect such usage. At the following Communion she was repelled from the table. We cannot tell what the offence was for which he thought her unfit to partake in the rite which should be the bond of all mutual forgiveness; and some will doubt whether in any case the feast at which Christ received Judas was meant to be turned into an occasion of heartburning and censoriousness. Such a doubt will assuredly be strengthened by the result in the present case. Mrs. Williamson's uncle took up the case warmly; legal proceedings, lasting nearly four months, were instituted against Wesley for defaming her character, and the inhabitants took up the quarrel and ranged themselves on one or the other side. Wesley had made himself thoroughly unpopular, and his parishioners desired nothing more than to get rid of him; but as he had done nothing illegal, and they were his prosecutors, they had to disguise this aim under elaborate precautions to prevent his departure; and a minority of the 'Grand

Jury' summoned to debate the matter transmitted a protest to the Trustees in England, in which they declared their opinion that the charge was a mere artifice intended to blacken his character. On the other hand, Wesley took the extraordinary step of reading out a statement of the quarrel to his congregation at evening service, an addition to the liturgy which must have been a considerable attraction to the part of his congregation which he would least have wished to gratify. But the calumny of the surgeon's wife and the warping influences of ecclesiasticism had hurt both the fine feeling of the gentleman and the humility of the Christian; and his conduct at this time is matter only for warning.

He saw at last that the legal proceedings were elaborate and cumbrous acting, and felt that every object with which he had come to America was defeated. Under these circumstances he felt, and was encouraged in this decision by his friends, that his wisest course was an immediate return to England. He accordingly put up an advertisement in the great square on Nov. 24th, to the effect that, as he designed to return shortly to England, his acquaintances were requested to return his books; obtained his travelling expenses from Mr. Causton; and in the end of November, in spite of a pretence of the magistrates to forbid his departure, not meant to deceive any one, he finally left Savannah.

Such was the disastrous and humiliating experience of John Wesley in that continent where the religious sect associated with his name was destined 'to spring up,' to use an expression taken from an American

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review of the present day, 'like the volcanic mountains of Mexico, which still amaze us by the figure they make in our geography.' Eight millions of religionists now call themselves disciples of a man who left their continent in disgrace which we can hardly refrain from calling well deserved.

## CHAPTER V.

### ENGLAND AT THE RISE OF METHODISM.

WHEN Wesley recrossed the Atlantic in the year 1737-38, he had reached a crisis of his life where his own individuality impinges on the history of his country, and a consideration of his own career involves some attempt to estimate the condition of his cotemporaries. We can never do justice to a Reformer till we understand the tendencies against which his efforts were directed, and by which his views of truth are modified; and before proceeding to the account of Wesley's active labours in this character, an attempt will be made to present the reader with a view of some characteristics of his countrymen during the years 1700-1740. To understand these characteristics rightly two facts must be borne in mind. The first of these, that the reaction against the Puritan rule of the preceding century had not yet spent its force, is somewhat surprising. Considering how short a time Puritan ascendancy lasted, and how completely it had been swept away, the reader who comes fresh to the consideration of this century would probably anticipate that from its commencement the orgies of the Restoration, not the reign of the saints, would be the object of horror and

aversion. It was not so. Nearly half a century of licence had not dimmed the hatred with which men thought of a Government that had undertaken to repress vice by penal laws; and their effect was still visible in a gross and general immorality which has left its trace in the laments common to the most opposite utterances of the day. So much of this testimony crowds on our hands, that it is difficult to pick out the most convincing portions. The following samples, however, taken from the utterances of those on the one hand who may be considered the forerunners of Methodism, of those on the other who would have looked down upon it with the greatest contempt, may be given here.

‘Our great enjoyments in liberty, laws, trade, &c.’ wrote Dr. Woodward in the last year of the seventeenth century, in his account of the religious societies which formed the nidus of Methodism, ‘are in manifest danger of being lost by those horrid enormities which have for some years past abounded in this our nation; for indeed they are gross, scandalous, and crying, even to the reproach of our Government and the great dishonour of our religion.’ ‘All men agree’—thus begins the ‘Proposal for a National Reformation of Manners,’ published in 1694, a proposal carried out in the establishment of the society with this aim—‘that atheism and profaneness never got such a high ascendant as at this day. A thick gloominess hath overspread our horizon, and our light looks like the evening of the world.’ Notwithstanding a recent proclamation, which the writer expected to have had a great effect, ‘vice and wickedness abound in every place, drunkenness

and lewdness escape unpunished; our ears in most companies are filled with imprecations of damnation; and the corners of our streets everywhere the horrible sound of oaths, curses, and blasphemous execrations.'

Such a complaint may be taken as a matter of course from religious reformers. We find it echoed, however, in Lord Chesterfield's famous speech against licensing the stage in 1737, and about the same time we meet with a careless reference to the same state of things in Lady Mary Wortley Montague's letters. Neither of them was likely to take a severe estimate of vice. 'When we complain of the licentiousness of the stage,' he says—after the fullest admission that the complaint was justified—'I fear we have more reason to complain of a general decay of virtue and morality among the people.' 'I am told,' she writes to the Countess of Mar, in 1723, 'that there is at this moment a bill cooking up at a hunting-seat in Norfolk to have *not* taken out of the Commandments and inserted in the Creed at the ensuing session. It certainly might be carried on with great ease, the world being utterly *revenu des bagatelles*; and honour, virtue, and reputation, which we used to hear of in our nursery, are as much laid aside as crumpled ribbons.'

But besides the slackening but still strong reaction against the enforced religion and decency of the preceding century which is indicated by such words as these, the reader must take note in the second place of an undercurrent of feeling provoked by this first tendency, and moving, not indeed in the opposite direction, but in one entirely different. The bad policy of vice is here the object of recoil, and it is this which



gives to the first half of the eighteenth century that didactic character which the literary and artistic merit of the teachers preserved for us with so much distinctness. The Essayists in their matchless prose, Pope in verse no less terse and vigorous, and Hogarth on canvas, attacked with all the weapons of satire and ridicule the vicious tendencies which struck them chiefly as instances of folly and bad taste. This contrast—of Taste enlisted on the side of Virtue, while Fashion remained on that of Vice—is one that it is very needful for the reader to understand if he would be just to the authors of the movement an attempt is here made to describe. Before we judge them we must remember that they did what the literary spirit of their time tried and failed to do. They had seen taste and culture attempt to regenerate society and fail; and those truths which in their hands actually did regenerate a large section of society, were naturally clothed in a dialect as unlike as possible to that which they had been taught to associate with futility.

The clearest index to the moral state of any class or nation is generally to be found in the amusements prevalent among them. Tried by this test, the class which was to yield Wesley his converts appears to have been singularly brutal. The amusements of the lower orders consisted entirely in tormenting animals. Bear-baiting and bull-baiting seem to have been the most popular diversions amongst the entirely uneducated; and the amusement of cock-throwing (battering to death a cock tied to a stake), by which every Shrove Tuesday was celebrated, and which was a diversion devoid of every element but that of in-

flicting pain, was thought a sufficient compensation for the personal injuries which, according to the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1737, were the invariable results of the ceremony. 'How many warm disputes and bloody quarrels,' exclaims the writer, in his plea for the discontinuance of the cruel and dangerous sport, 'has it not occasioned among the surrounding mob? How many arms, legs, and skulls have been broken by the missiles intended for the sufferer in the strings? It is dangerous in some places to pass the streets on Shrove Tuesday. The barbarity to the harmless creature at the stake, one would think, should be an object of horror both to the actors and spectators in this inhuman tragedy; but the greatest unhappiness attending the rude exercises of cock-throwing, bull-baiting, prize-fighting, and the like bear-garden diversions, is that they inspire the mind of children with a savage disposition, highly pleased with acts of cruelty.' Whether the explanation given by this writer—that this cruel sport originated in a practical pun on the cock's Latin name of *gallus*, and the symbol thus presented for the national hatred of the French—throws any light on the zest with which it was pursued, may be doubted. Mere cruelty was probably amusement enough for those who took part in it. We need not linger over this unpleasant subject longer than to quote two witnesses who will not be suspected of any exaggerated sensibility. 'I am sorry,' says Steele (*Guardian*, May 21, 1713), 'that this temper' (an enjoyment of the sufferings of animals) 'is become almost a distinguishing characteristic of our own nation, from the observation which is made by

foreigners on our beloved amusements, bear-baiting, cock-fighting, and the like. It will be said that these are the amusements of the common people. It is true, but they are the amusements of no other common people. I wish I knew how to answer the reproach which is cast upon us thereby.' Hogarth's 'Progress of Cruelty,' as he tells us, 'was engraved with the hope of in some degree correcting that barbarous treatment of animals, the very sight of which renders the streets of our metropolis so distressing to every feeling mind. If they have had this effect, and checked the progress of cruelty, I am more proud of having been the author than I should be of having painted Raphael's Cartoons.'

Of course the indifference to suffering testified by these extracts was not confined to the case of brutes. The spirit nourished in bull-baiting and cock-throwing found vent in tumults more rough and aimless than any uproar in our own day, and in cases of manslaughter, due wholly to a spirit of wanton barbarity, to which our own records of crime afford hardly any parallel. It would be easy to illustrate these assertions, but each individual case seems inadequate to the inference suggested, and to give them in their true proportions would delay us too much. What is most remarkable about these records, however, is the tone in which they are made. The brutal recklessness which sacrificed life to a practical jest is spoken of in the newspapers of the day as 'folly' or 'ill-luck.' Death when the result of accident was considered a fair subject of mirth. During the severe winter of 1739, when the Thames was frozen over and booths erected upon it, an

exciseman fell into one of the holes made in the ice, and the brutal jest made on the drowned man, 'that if the owner of the booth had any run goods he was lost, as an exciseman was gone into his cellar,' is given merely as the good saying of a 'merry fellow' against the member of an unpopular class. This spirit of savage recklessness is developed into riot on every possible opportunity. Not to speak of the numerous mobs which were brought together by other motives, those goaded to mischief by the mere hunger for sensation characteristic of coarse, low natures, occupy no inconspicuous place in the records we are tracing. During the festivities on the anniversary of the coronation of George II., for instance, October 11th, 1738, a serious riot was occasioned by the City Marshal attempting to restrain the idle boys of the crowd in the dangerous trick of throwing squibs. He was beaten and abused, and on some of the offenders being secured and carried to a neighbouring ale-house, the mob (for whose safety these exertions had been necessary) followed the prisoners to the tavern and rescued their companions; and so frequent were disturbances on nights of any general festivity that the inhabitants of Cheapside, where these bonfires usually took place, were moved to petition the Court of Common Council that these boisterous commemorations might be done away.

Manifestations such as these prepare us for the exceptional prevalence of drunkenness during this period. Alarmed at the growth of this evil, the Government tried to repress it in 1736 by imposing high duties on the favourite drink of the people—gin ;

but as the Gin Act seems to have been powerless in mitigating this evil, and was certainly effective in bringing in another—the reward offered to informers against unlicensed vendors of this spirit inducing a number of people to get their living in this way—it was repealed in 1743. The fact that one of the stories against John Wesley was that he was guilty of selling gin without a licence shows us how common both the illegal traffic and the trade of an informer must have been while this Act was in force.

In dwelling on the amusements and pursuits of the people, almost all that has to be said upon the subject of their crimes has been sufficiently suggested. From such a condition as is here implied, we may expect that hard-hearted indifference and levity should add their tributary influence to the perennial sources of crime, and this expectation is borne out by all that we know of the course of justice. We are struck by the amount of apparently causeless cruelty brought out in the criminal records of the day. The frequent highway robberies, the encounters of the road and the humbler imitations, are no more than what our associations with the age of Turpin (executed in 1739) lead us to expect; but the needless ill-treatment inflicted by the highwaymen on their defenceless victims strikes us as a fresh illustration of the brutality of the time. Robberies had certainly very much increased in the few years immediately preceding the period here spoken of (1740). 'London was formerly remarkable for being the best governed city in the universe,' says a writer in the 'Political State of Great Britain,' in a pardonable outburst of patriotic exaggeration; 'sorry I am that foreigners do not now make the

remark. These stories of robberies are such as were never heard of in the last few years, and are such indubitable proofs of the depravity of our morals that we may justly hope those in authority will think of a thorough reformation.' The experiment of a severe penal code certainly was not left untried. Men were hung in those days for stealing five shillings' worth of goods in a shop, at least the Acts which inflicted death for these offences still remained in our statute-books about the time of Wesley's return from America; a majority of those convicted were executed. Meantime the scenes at the pillory proved that the readiness of the populace to join a rescue did not imply compassion for the criminal.

The condition of the lower orders is the point most essential to a clear apprehension of the work of John Wesley. But such an apprehension, from the point of view here taken, would be inadequate unless we included in the present sketch some view of their superiors in station. Much indeed of what has been said of the poor is quite as applicable to the rich. The amusements of the upper classes were rough and brutal; the amateur coachmen of the day drove so violently as to endanger life and limb, the highest nobility crowded the booths for a boxing-match, while cock-fighting is described by the writer quoted above as a specially genteel diversion. The atrocities attributed to the Mohocks—a gang of disorderly rakes who infested the streets at the beginning of the century—afford us a good measure of the barbarity which could be plausibly attributed to educated men of the day; and forcibly suggest the influence of such diversions as are unquestionable. Nor was the love

of riot by any means a distinctive characteristic of the lower orders. The theatres were often at this time the scenes of the wildest uproar, when boxers were introduced into the pit to support with their blows the taste of a particular faction, and the actors only escaped severe personal injury by flight from a stage on which the flooring was pulled up, the curtain cut to pieces, and the benches and lustres broken. On one of these occasions a gallant spectator was seen to fling a penknife at an actress guilty of no sin but being of a different nation from his own. The same spirit which found vent in such outrages as these stamped itself in the literature of the day. Controversy, even where it confines itself to ground the most remote from every source of excitement, is at this time incredibly fierce, malignant, and personal. We find a mathematical discussion, for instance (1737, 'Gentleman's Magazine'), concluded with the assertion that one party has 'insinuated things quite foreign to the purpose, with as little regard to truth as decency,' and the squabble between two newspapers owes all its pungency to such images as 'an infamous miscreant who has wallowed in the mire of calumny ever since he left the bogs where he was engendered, and came naked and starved to seek his fortune in this country as a knight of the post, a puff to a gaming table,' &c. (*Daily Gazette*, April 17th, 1738). Much of this insolence is attributable to the fierce party spirit of the day, which sometimes shows itself on the most inappropriate occasions; but a large proportion is due solely to that need for some strong condiment which makes men's amusements brutal. The following anecdote may be taken as a fair test of this motive force.

Doctor Moore, an elegant writer of that day, was, he tells us, in the shop of a bookseller when the latter received a manuscript, which he passed on to him to read with evident satisfaction, telling him it was the character of a cotemporary peer to be inserted in a work then publishing. Dr. Moore, after perusing the scurrilous libel, the object of which it described as a monster of sensuality and corruption, returned it to the publisher with the remark that the violence of the poison would here prove its own antidote; the malignity which animated this production, he said, would be apparent to every reader of common understanding. 'Except that it does not exist,' replied the bookseller, and handed the critic another character of the same person from the same pen, in which the encomiums of the greatest men of all ages were ransacked for compliments worthy of forming a wreath for the English nobleman, whose conspicuous position and vigorous character ensured his critic an audience alike for his eulogium and his pasquinade. Dr. Moore expresses considerable indignation at the performance of the literary bravo, but allows that the public which read such performances with eagerness must share with their author the responsibility of their production.

The tastes of the bear-garden, thus influential in moulding the literature of the eighteenth century, must be accepted as one characteristic trait of that time. But perhaps when we are estimating the differences between the upper classes of that day and our own, the feature which strikes us most forcibly is their impurity. The taste of our day does not in this respect allow of a complete por-



trait of the past, and our appreciation of the teachers here denominated evangelical suffers from our incapacity of realizing the grossness of the amusements they denounced and the immorality of that social life which they avoided. It is at once possible and necessary, however, to bring forward the most striking point of this contrast. Unless we suppose that the humour of Addison and of Steele was employed in senseless and pointless fabrications, we must concede that the young men of that day had one temptation to immorality which certainly no one can plead in our own—the demands of fashion. When a paper in the ‘Spectator’ presents us with the image of a ‘pretty fellow’ pleading an assignation as an excuse for attending afternoon prayer; when the false pretences of a young squire to vice are made matter of ridicule in a periodical specially designed for the perusal of ladies,—we cannot refuse to believe that only a hundred years ago so inverted were the objects of shame and pride that men blushed at being suspected of purity. Disgrace indeed pertained to adultery; but it was the injured husband and the guiltless offspring who felt the weight of that contempt which never touched the guilty, and the instance of the impurity of that day which has struck the present writer most forcibly is a letter in the ‘Gentleman’s Magazine’ pleading for the unfortunate offspring of criminal intercourse. After adducing those arguments against such injustice which would find a response in any age, he proceeds to one which we should certainly think peculiar to his own. ‘And after all,’ he says, ‘who can be sure that the state which he thus visits with

contempt is not his own. *Which of us can say he is not spurious?* Imagine that sentence addressed to any readers of a respectable periodical in our own day, and you have a good estimate of the difference between eighteenth-century morality and our own.

But if private life was thus polluted, may we hope to find that virtue had taken refuge in the interests of a public career? If such a contrast is ever possible, it certainly was not afforded by our country under the administration of Sir Robert Walpole. An anti-ministerialist paper of the day (*Common Sense*, April 1, 1738) reported a debate whether 'our enemy' had any honour, in which one of the party remarked that 'it would be strange if he were without it, as he had purchased that of half the nation.' 'Twas a purchase easily made,' Walpole is said to have remarked with a sneer, when the *mot* was repeated to him by some officious or ill-natured friend. The epigram may be an invention, but it condenses an unquestionable truth. During the earlier portion of this century, when Jacobitism was a reality, perjury had ceased to be dishonourable; nay, we are assured that Shippen, the chief of the Jacobites of that day, was applauded for 'swearing against his conscience to serve the good cause' (Lord Mahon, ii. 223). Looking back upon that time with the experience of a royal family settled on the throne for a century and a half, it is not easy to realize the position of men who were preparing to be safe in a possible second Restoration; but if we succeed in doing so, we shall readily believe that

where loyalty to the absent king was not the purest of passions, where devotion to the established government was not the most unselfish of principles, one and the other of these feelings would prove the inlet of perjury. The Jacobite would think it a small thing to forswear himself to King George, if he might thereby put King James in the way of getting his own again. The Hanoverian, without caring much about King George, would think he might tamper a little with his rival if that were the only way of keeping him out of the country. 'I have often,' says Lord Chesterfield, 'had the same man's letters in my hands at once, some to try to make his peace at home, and others to the Pretender to assure him it was only a feigned reconciliation that he might be better able to serve him.' Lord Mahon even goes so far as to think, on what will appear to some of his readers insufficient evidence, that Walpole's own letters might have told a similar tale. The state of public life where such an hypothesis is possible concerning the Prime Minister, needs no further illustration.

Such was the world which the earliest Methodists addressed themselves to convert. Impure, brutal, and corrupt, false to their king, false to their party, making a prey of women and a sport of religion, the Christian religion since it was first professed has surely had no nominal adherents who more needed to be brought back to a sense of its meaning. The often-quoted lament of Butler, that 'it has now come to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is no longer a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious,' is

one among many proofs that even the name had lost much of its power. A spirit of rebellion against the Governor of the universe as well as the earthly representative was prevalent in the nation; and a dim sense of the connection between the two led to public notice of the prevailing profanity. In the session of 1737, a 'Committee for Religion' was appointed by the Lords to examine into the causes of the present notorious wickedness and profaneness. 'The Committee have sufficient ground to believe,' their report says, 'that several loose and disorderly persons have of late erected themselves into a club under the name of Blasters, and have used means to draw into this impious society several of the youth of the country,' one of whom 'professes himself a votary of the devil, and hath several times uttered the most daring and execrable blasphemies against the name of God, and often made use of such obscene and unheard-of expressions' as the Lords' Committee chose to pass over in silence. We may hope that the chief fact thereby established was that the witness much enjoyed shocking the Lords' Committee, but we can hardly deny that a prevailing want of reverence for the Centre of all reverence is proved almost as much by such assertions being readily believed as by their being true.

The religion thus despised, however, had still its band of organized teachers, and we have now to include in this rapid survey that class of men whose work Wesley sought to complete and extend. The condition of the clergy of the Established Church is a point on which any wrong view utterly falsifies the

whole history of Methodism. In many respects it was very different in Wesley's day and in our own. A clergyman in our own day, whatever else he is, is at least an officer of a widely-extended organization of charity and of education, and the business thus thrown upon him occupies a large proportion of his time, and connects him with his fellow-men by many secular links, so that it is quite conceivable that many persons should regard him as a useful member of society, who regard his spiritual functions as mere make-believe. Now during the period we are considering this was not the case. This wide field of activity, which is open to any active-minded clergyman of our own time, was not included within the horizon of his predecessor of the eighteenth century. Charity then meant almsgiving. Education, even in the feeble germ which then existed, was looked upon with suspicion. Of all the numerous charitable associations of our own day almost the only members then existing were the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. One of the first efforts of the latter was the erection of charity schools, for which the clergy preached an annual sermon, and from the account appended to these sermons we learn that the society has been very careful to obviate the *common* objections against charity schools, 'that they breed up children in ignorance and pride.' That quotation, better than any amount of description, will suggest to the reader a state of things in which the modern ideal of a clergyman's work was impossible. The clergyman of the eighteenth century, accordingly, was a priest or no-

thing, and in this character he had several difficulties to encounter which were peculiar to his time.

In the first place, there was at that time a very strong feeling against priesthood, throughout the whole English nation. There is a very strong feeling against it at the present day. But this is confined to a section of the nation,—a large and important section no doubt, but not the whole; on the contrary, during the last half-century there have been two distinct movements towards sacerdotalism, and some among those who have taken part in them are memorable men. Now the only memorable men who were led in this direction towards the middle of the eighteenth century (unless Law is to be reckoned with them), were the Wesleys themselves. In all other men of mark of that time the variation of feeling towards it is only that of stronger or fainter dislike.

In the second place, the clergy of that day were inferior to the clergy of this in a matter by no means unimportant for one who has to influence others—social standing. It would take us too long to go into the causes of this change, but the fact is unquestionable. What, for instance, should we think of a letter in one of our most widely-read periodicals, complaining that the chaplain was not expected to remain at table during the second course? An amusing paper on this subject in one of the 'Tatlers,' paraphrased in Macaulay's famous sketch, narrates the rebuff experienced by a clergyman who ventured to help himself to a jelly: 'The lady of the house,' says the writer, '*though otherwise a devout woman*, told me that it did not become a man of my cloth to delight

in such frivolous food.' The 'Tatler,' after much humorous speculation over the progress of a custom which bade fair to reduce the chaplain's allowance to a tithe of the dinner, goes on seriously to declare that this practice 'deters men of generous minds from placing themselves in such a station of life.' This homely detail may serve as a specimen of many indications which convince us that the clergyman of that day occupied a position which hardly any educated man would accept now.

But the clergy of the Church of England, during the period that follows the Revolution of 1688, had a much larger hindrance to contend with than either a low social standing or an unfavourable position as members of a class regarded with peculiar jealousy. The clergy of a preceding generation had taught that the duty of the subject to the monarch was exhausted in the exercise of passive obedience. When James II. demanded from them a not excessive instance of this obedience, however,—to read in their pulpits the Declaration of Indulgence, by which religious liberty was accorded to every sect in England,—they almost unanimously declined to submit, and took an active part in that revolution by which his son-in-law was seated on his throne. When once their work was done, they saw the harsh contrast between what they had preached and what they had practised. There are two courses which upright and logical men could take at such a crisis. They might say to themselves, 'Our view of this matter would not work, and must be false: let us confess that we were wrong, and that it may be a duty to resist the monarch as well as to obey him.' Or secondly, they might say,

'Our view was right, and our actions wrong; let us make any sacrifice rather than maintain a false position.' There were individuals, no doubt, who took each side of this alternative. A considerable body of clergymen (Bishop Ken among them), who, as martyrs to an unpopular cause, have never had all the honour they deserved, gave up all that makes life comfortable rather than take the oath of allegiance to William; and, on the other hand, there must have been many who saw that, after the clergy had helped to pull down one king and set up another, the duty of obeying the monarch could no longer be presented as something ultimate. But, on the whole, the Church of England after the Revolution avoided both the positions which were possible to a sincere and logical mind. Her servants kept her emoluments and dignities, but avoided the confession by which alone they would be justified in retaining them. They kept their unquestioning reverence for authority, but after throwing off the authority of James II. they were obliged to filter away from this doctrine everything but the worship of success.

Hence arose two results. One was a horror of thoroughness in any direction. The idol of this school of divinity was the Golden Mean. This characteristic of the Church is well represented in one of the 'Tatlers' (No. 220), where Mr. Bickerstaff describes an invention of his which he calls the Ecclesiastical Thermometer. 'The reader will observe,' says Mr. Bickerstaff, with what has now the effect of bitter sarcasm, 'that the Church is placed in the middle part of the glass, between zeal and moderation, the situation in which she always flourishes, and in which every Englishman



wishes to see her who is a friend to the constitution and to his country. However, when it mounts to zeal 'tis not amiss, and when it sinks to moderation 'tis still in a most admirable temper,—the worst of it is that when once it begins to rise it has still an inclination to ascend, insomuch that it is apt to climb from zeal to wrath. The point of doctrine which I would propagate by this invention is the very same which was long ago advanced by that able teacher Horace. We should take care never to overshoot ourselves in the pursuits even of Virtue. Whether zeal or moderation be the point we aim at, let us keep fire out of the one and frost out of the other.' Those words are the motto of the Church of the eighteenth century.

This was one result of the political attitude of the Church; another was equally remarkable. Obedience to God and to the king had been firmly associated with each other, and so they remained. But obedience to the king, when interpreted so as to allow of turning him out of doors, was discovered to be a formula meaning as much as calling oneself the humble servant of a correspondent. We were his servants just as long as it was our interest to be so, and no longer. How then was the other claim to be enforced which had been bound up with monarchic rights in so firm a knot by Anglican loyalty? Clearly by showing that it was *always* our interest to be the servants of God. Exactly the footing on which a wise man would put obedience to the State—that it was, on the whole, the indispensable condition of general happiness—was at this period the claim made for Christianity. This belief emerges with peculiar strength in all the arguments against freethinkers.

'I will endeavour to show,' says the *Guardian*—a paper which specially addressed itself to the task of combating their views—'that liberty and truth are not in themselves desirable, but only as they relate to a further end. Shall a wise man prefer the knowledge of a troublesome and afflicting truth before a pleasant error which would cheer his soul and be attended with no ill consequences?' 'History informs us,' says the *Weekly Miscellany*—the representative of our *Guardian* or *Record*, and a valuable guide for the religious opinions of the Church party of the day—'that the more or less religious any nation whatever was, the greater or less degrees of conveniences it constantly abounded with; therefore governors have a right, as guardians of human happiness, to tie men to the observance of religion' (November 1733). This is a theme frequently urged by this paper, which was set up under the influence of Waterland, with the design of combating the Freethinkers, and expired in 1741, in a desperate attempt to crush the Methodists. 'Unless we believe the great truths of religion,' it urged in 1734, 'every man's present happiness will be his rule. But if we take in a consideration of God's providence and a future state, all these clashing inclinations and jarring interests are reconciled.' This line of argument is well summed up by the address to the Freethinkers of a poet in the 'Gentleman's Magazine:—

' With all your deep learning,  
 Pray who is most wise?  
 We who follow Christ's doctrine,  
 Or you who despise?

Since this, sir, as fact, is  
Allowed by your crew,  
We're safe though it's false, you  
Are damned if it's true ;'

and the name brought into this scrap of doggerel is as expressive of the reverence with which such controversies were conducted as is the argument itself of the value of what was contended for.

All the pictures which remain to us—and they are graphic and numerous—of the working of such a system as is here described, bear out our expectations of worldliness and inefficiency. A fashionable church at this date, if we may trust these descriptions, was a convenient resort for whispering scandal, for displaying skill in the management of the fan, or exhibiting diamonds, toupees, and 'lace heads;' a good opportunity of putting a modest girl to the blush by staring at her through a spy-glass; anything but a place for prayer or even for religious oratory. The one dread of the average reader or preacher was (to paraphrase the same descriptions) lest he should betray any infection of 'enthusiasm' or 'cant;' he was too much occupied in modernizing the language of the Prayer-book to attend to its meaning, and the slang words sprinkled through his sermon to give it a knowing air, or the polysyllables in which its meaning was wrapped up, were equally adopted as a fence against anything that savoured of earnestness. There are, it is true, few more attractive pictures than that which rises to the imagination of every reader at every mention of eighteenth-century religion,—Sir Roger de Coverley among his tenantry at church, in the 'Spectator'

But that shadowy and graceful religion, modelled as it was on the forms of a fast-receding feudalism, had no weapon to convert such a world as has been here described.

It is evident that such a condition as this told on the congregations. The effect of the Act of Toleration (1689), which many persons understood as releasing them from the legal obligation of attendance at any place of worship, was seen in the speedy emptying of the churches, and Dean Prideaux drew up a circular explaining that only the choice of the place of worship was left to the parishioner, and exhorting all churchwardens to present all 'profane and irreligious absentees from church' at his visitation, when it appears that some such persons were actually punished. This letter, we learn without much surprise, 'could not *wholly* cure the evil.' Some years later, at the period we are more immediately considering, this presentment of absentees from church is spoken of as one of the duties which the churchwardens were obliged by an oath to perform, and by the state of public feeling to neglect.

And this may be taken as a description of all their duties. They were supposed to be a sort of spiritual policemen, keeping down vice by penalties having some connection with the next world, as the officers of the State kept down crime by penalties belonging wholly to this. Not that they were altogether to abstain from referring to these last, for they were advised in a State paper of William III. 'to append to their sermons such statute laws as are provided against such vice or sin as is their subject for that day.' But the only sanction of these laws in *their* hands was to 'put

a difference between the clean and the unclean,' as it was said, in not suffering the latter to approach the Communion-table; and of course in the days before the repeal of the Test Act, when attendance at the Sacrament was the necessary preliminary to the acceptance of any public office, this weapon, if they could have used it, would have been a very formidable one. We have seen how this discipline succeeded when it was exercised by Wesley in Georgia; and another instance where the measure was taken by one in an even more favourable position for trying it, will show us how it was likely to work in ordinary cases. No clergyman of that day was the object of a more lively affection than the saintly Bishop Wilson, of Sodor and Man. Some time before Wesley's visit to Georgia he repelled from the Communion-table the wife of the Governor of the island, on account of her having slandered another lady. The consequence was, that he was imprisoned for defamation. Such was the enthusiastic affection with which he had inspired his parishioners that they were only prevented pulling down the Governor's house by the Bishop's address from his prison window. An ordinary parish priest could hardly be expected to take a step which one in an exceptionally favourable position found so disastrous.

The purpose of the foregoing sketch would be wholly mistaken if it were regarded as a picture of the Church of England under the Georges. The Church of that day had merits which are wanting to our own, and which no attempt is made here to point out. Two of the greatest men who have ever entered our Church, Berkeley and Butler, are to be

found among the prelates of the period here reviewed, and we may note in most of those who attained any eminence whatever a sober colouring of thought, a common sense, a reticence and manliness which our own religious writers might, perhaps, copy with advantage. But with all this the student of John Wesley's work has nothing to do. When this careful avoidance of extremes puts itself forward as the gospel whereby men are to be saved, it is time that a different school should arise to whom the precepts of good taste should be less and the claims of truth more.

Such was the school which in these pages is spoken of as Evangelical, an epithet which is to be taken in its largest and simplest sense, to designate those who in an artificial age sought to return to the literal teaching of the Gospels. In the middle of the century Wesley and Whitefield were its only prominent representatives, afterwards it included many within the pale of the Church itself, and the Methodists no longer formed the vanguard of the movement. During its earlier stage they were its most prominent representatives, and as such their history is followed here.

## CHAPTER VI.

### WESLEY A MORAVIAN.

WESLEY'S homeward voyage, in 1738, marks the conclusion of his High-Church period. He abated nothing of his attachment to the ordinances of the Church either then or to the last day of his life, and he did not so soon reach that degree of independence of her hierarchy and some of her rules which marks his furthest point of divergence; but his journals during this voyage chronicle for us that deep dissatisfaction which is felt wherever an earnest nature wakes up to the incompleteness of a traditional religion; and his after life, compared with his two years in Georgia, makes it evident that he passed at this time into a new spiritual region. His journals are marked by a depression which we never meet with again. 'By the most infallible of proofs, inward feeling,' he writes on January 8th, 1738, 'I am convinced of levity and luxuriancy of spirit, appearing by my not speaking words tending to edify, but most by my manner of speaking of my enemies. Lord, save, or I perish. I went to India to convert the Indians, but oh! who shall convert me, who is he that shall deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well, nay, I believe myself, while

no danger is near. But let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. I think verily, if the Gospel is true, I am safe, for I not only have given, and do give, all my goods to feed the poor, I not only give my body to be burned, drowned, or whatever God shall appoint for me, but I follow after charity, if haply I may attain it. I *now* believe the Gospel is true. I show my faith by my works, by staking my all upon it. Whoever sees me, sees I would be a Christian. Therefore are my ways not as other men's ways. Therefore I have been, I am content to be, a by-word of reproach. But in a storm I think, "What if the Gospel be not true? Then thou art of all men most foolish. For what hast thou given thy goods, thy ease, thy friends, thy reputation, thy country, thy life? For what art thou wandering over the face of the earth? A dream, a cunningly devised fable." Oh, who will deliver me from the fear of death? What shall I do? Where shall I fly from it? Should I fight against it by thinking or by not thinking of it? A wise man advised me some time since "Be still and go on." Perhaps this is best, to look upon it as my cross, when it comes to let it humble me and quicken all my resolutions, especially that of praying without ceasing, and at other times to take no thought about it, but quietly to go on in the work of the Lord.'

The foregoing extracts compared with the fragment of intercourse which took place at this time between Wesley and Whitefield show us how strong a contrast may be presented between the inward feelings and the outward conduct; they also show, perhaps, that in this case these feelings could not have been quite so deep as they seem. During Wesley's absence Whitefield



had made great strides in the public estimation, and in the year 1738, far more than either of the Wesleys represents the cause of Methodism to the secular world. His course from the time of their separation at Oxford in 1735 had been one of unimpeded progress in the hearts of all who knew him; volunteered help reached him from opposite and unexpected quarters, and the ordination pressed on him by the Bishop of Gloucester became the immediate prelude to sudden and great popularity. As Chaplain at the Tower of London, as curate in a small village, and as preacher in the various churches of the metropolis, his reception was equally eager; and when he preached a charity sermon, the collectors carried with difficulty the contributions of more than ten times the usual amount to the Communion-table. After such an impression as this we are not surprised to hear of a profitable curacy being offered to the eloquent youth whose address had thrilled so many hearts. This tempting offer, however, was refused. Whitefield had the soul of a missionary, and already the summons had been received to preach the Gospel on a foreign soil, if not to a foreign race. Wesley had written to his spiritual pupil in a tone of urgent appeal. 'Only Mr. Delamotte is with me until God shall stir up the hearts of some of His servants to come over and help us. What if thou art the man, Mr. Whitefield? Do you ask me what you shall have? Food to eat, and raiment to put on, a house to lay your head in such as your Lord had not, and a crown of glory that fadeth not away.'—Could there be a more definite invitation than this? Yet when Whitefield had obeyed it, had turned his back on the popularity and applause

of the metropolis, and had entered into solemn engagements in consequence of it, he received, as the vessel in which he was to sail lay at anchor in the Downs, the following extraordinary note: 'When I saw that the wind which was carrying you out brought me in, I asked counsel of God. His answer you have enclosed,'—the enclosure being a slip of paper which Wesley had drawn as a lot bearing the words—'Let him return at once to London.'

On the very same day on which Wesley forwarded to Whitefield this strange direction from Heaven, he was writing of himself in his journal in these terms: 'This then have I learned in the ends of the earth, that I am fallen short of the glory of God, that my whole heart is altogether corrupt and abominable, and consequently my whole life, that I am a child of wrath, an heir of hell,' &c. It would have been very difficult for a person who had just described himself in these terms, to suspect himself of arrogance, though it is not at all difficult for an impartial reader to perceive the compatibility of the states of mind indicated in his direction to Whitefield and his description of himself.

Happily Whitefield had the sense to disregard this unwise direction; he knew that the Divine Will is equally accessible to all who seek to be moulded by it, and that intentions referring to him would have been made known to him and not to Wesley. He sailed for America, where he met with none of his predecessor's difficulties, and Wesley returned to London.

Here his divergence from his clerical brethren began to show itself. He brought with him a con-

siderable reputation, for he was everywhere asked to preach, and his eloquence was sufficiently attractive to collect a congregation on one occasion before sunrise on a February morning. But everywhere the result was the same—some expression of offence seems to have been the invariable epilogue to these sermons. ‘I was informed,’ he writes after his sermon of the 5th of February, ‘that many of the best in the parish were so offended, that I was to preach here no more.’ In less than a week the sentence is repeated, after a sermon in a church at Holborn, the choice of the text in this case being enough to show that nothing that we should think startling doctrine could have been preached—‘Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.’ ‘O hard sayings! who can hear them?’ writes Wesley, after the quotation, and the exclamation shows us the different state of mind addressed by him and a preacher of our own day: the ‘hard saying’ is with us become a truism. Of his next sermon he only tells us that it gave great offence, and immediately afterwards he left London; but on preaching here again, at both services (on May 7th) he was informed he was not to preach any more in either church. Within a few days the intimation was repeated after ‘his heart had been enlarged to declare the love of God to all that were oppressed of the devil,’ in preaching on the text, ‘He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?’—and the same things took place on four other occasions; so that within the first quarter of 1738, the greater part of which he spent in

travelling in the country, he had been interdicted from nine pulpits in London.

The reader who turns to Wesley's sermons in the hope of finding some explanation of the general offence given by his first preaching in London, will be disappointed. Sermons containing all their essential doctrine have been heard many times in an English pulpit without depriving one hearer of his customary nap. The following letter, written by Gambold to Charles Wesley about this time, when compared with the view of Hanoverian divinity suggested in the last chapter, may perhaps afford this explanation:—'I have seen, upon this occasion, more than I ever could have imagined, how intolerable the doctrine of faith is to the mind of man; and how peculiarly intolerable to religious men. One may say the most unchristian things, even down to Deism; the most enthusiastic things, so they proceed but upon mental raptures; the most severe things, even the whole rigour of ascetic mortification, and all this will be forgiven. But if you speak of faith in such a manner as makes Christ a saviour to the utmost; as discovers a greater pollution in the best of us than we could before acknowledge, but brings a greater deliverance from it than we could before expect;—if any one offers to talk at this rate, he shall be heard with the same abhorrence as if he was going to rob mankind of their salvation. I am persuaded that a Montanist or a Novatian who from the height of his purity should look down with contempt upon poor sinners, and exclude them from all mercy, would not be thought such an overthrower of the Gospel as he who should learn from the Author

of it to be a friend of publicans and sinners, and to sit down upon the level with them as soon as they begin to repent. But this is not to be wondered at. For all religious people have such a quantity of righteousness acquired by much painful exercise and formed at last into current habits, which is their wealth both for this world and the next. Now all other schemes of religion are either so complaisant as to tell them they are very rich and have enough to triumph in; or else only a little rough but friendly in the main, by telling them their riches are not yet sufficient, but by such arts of self-denial and mental refinement they may enlarge the stock. But the doctrine of faith is a downright robber. It takes away all this wealth, and only tells us it is deposited with us for somebody else, upon whose bounty we must live like mere beggars. Indeed they that are truly beggars may stoop to live in this dependent situation; it suits them well enough. But they who have long distinguished themselves from the herd of vicious wretches, or who have even gone beyond moral men; for them to be told that they are but the same needy, impotent, insignificant vessels of mercy with the others: this is more shocking to reason than transubstantiation. For reason had rather resign its pretensions to judge what is bread or flesh than have this honour wrested from it, to be the architect of virtue and righteousness. But where am I running? My design was only to give you warning that wherever you go this "foolishness of preaching" will alienate hearts from you, and open mouths against you.' Whatever we may think of the reason given by this writer (whose name is not

mentioned, and who very possibly might be Gambold), there can be no question that he was a true prophet as regarded John Wesley's preaching. The spring of 1738 saw him shut out of all the pulpits which would have given him influence within the Church.

Thus debarred from more formal utterances, every fragment of intercourse was converted into an opportunity of direct exhortation, an opportunity frequently offered him by the journeys which he took at this time to visit his friends and relations. His admonitions met with every variety of reception. Sometimes the strangers whom he met at inn-parlours, and on the high road, listened to his abrupt and unpreluded remarks with signs of deep feeling; sometimes they were 'more inclined to speak than to hear,' sometimes they were too gay to listen, and sometimes too refined, but the reader is surprised to read of so few rebuffs. There were times when the instincts which Wesley called negligence, and to which many would be inclined to give a different name, repressed the warning voice; on one such occasion, a shower of hail which followed close upon the unimproved opportunity was taken by him as a rebuke from Heaven for his indolence; but the lesson was rarely needed, and not forgotten.

But while thus active in preaching to others, he was not, according to his own account, in the full sense of the word a Christian. The spiritual change which all Methodist biographies date and describe with great minuteness, forms the very centre of his Moravian period, and took place wholly under the influence of that body of men. He had hardly been a week in England when he met, at the house of a Dutch

actions. Now the question arises, If this right bent of desire is goodness, how is any one to attain it who has it not already? It seems impossible to describe his making any step towards it which does not imply that he has it. A man who really wishes to leave off hating his enemy *has* left off hating him ; the arrow is withdrawn from the wound though the wound be not at once healed. But how is he to begin to wish this? Effort, so far from helping on this result, seems to retard it, for it occupies his mind with something which it seems his only chance of healing to forget. And it is not difficult to forget. In this world, where people are not divided into good and bad, and where motives are complex, and there are many things to think of besides right and wrong, struggle with evil is not necessarily a prominent fact in the experience of any one. Angry feelings are worn out, and mean feelings get woven in with something good, and the general result is something mixed and tolerable ; and thus the experience of those who cannot aim at this dilution and oblivion of evil, but seek deliverance from it, is apt to seem exceptional to others. But just in proportion as what any one hates is not the inconveniences and disadvantages of evil, but evil itself, so far he will feel that it is something that must be taken away from him and cannot be shaken off by him, that it must be the act of some one else, and not of himself. It is the most memorable of all events when any one wakes up to the conviction that, besides all the men and women he sees round about him, there is a person who is not seen, but who is just as real as they, and an agent in a sense in which they are not ; when he comes to feel that certain results are due to

the will of God not only in the sense in which any one must believe in it who believes in Him at all—that He is almighty and could prevent it if He chose—but in that same direct personal sense in which a man's lifting his hand is the result of his choosing to do so. It is literally and simply a new life. An element is come into the man's dealings with his fellow-men which alters everything, and which, in the words of one who will always be remembered among the best exponents of this change,<sup>1</sup> makes it 'delightful to escape from that which before it was unendurable to give up, and impossible to avoid that which it was before impossible to do.'

There could be no more simple expression for this change than Conversion, if that word were taken, according to its etymological meaning, as a new turn given to the mind in combination with another. This word has acquired a technical meaning, in which its simple meaning is hidden; it has gathered a cloud of unreal association, and we have a difficulty in contemplating it in connection with any real event. And yet even those parts of the Evangelical idea of conversion which seem most unmeaning have a meaning. Wesley's insistence on the instantaneous nature of conversion was much objected to in his day, and he replied in words to which all must assent who believe the New Testament, that what he meant was that a new life must have a first moment. He did not always use language so reasonable as this. Much of what he has written seems to encourage the notion that there is a great chasm in human history, on one side of which men

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine.



are bad, and on the other good—a notion, perhaps, as hurtful to religion as any that has ever been bound up with it, for every one who looks at the world as it is must give it up, and if it has been made a part of Christianity this must go with it. But for what was specially technical and narrow in the edition which Wesley and his cotemporaries gave of this doctrine, we must look to the character of the time. On the one hand, the eighteenth century presents us with a picture of vice and irreligion such as can hardly have been exceeded since it was a Christian country. On the other, literature was then far more distinctly moral than it is now. It was not strange that those who watched this harsh contrast, recoiled from the good sense and good taste which had shown themselves impotent in the work of reformation, and laid stress on all adventitious circumstances which put a distinction between the moral writers of that day and themselves.

Like almost every other event in the lives of the two brothers, their conversion formed an additional bond between them. His brother's conversion was completed during this interval, also under the influence of Peter Boehler, and during an illness which led him to resign his position of secretary to Oglethorpe, to the great regret of the latter. The brothers, closely as they had always been united, seem more than ever one after this cotemporaneous entrance on a new life. Before passing on to the foundation of the Methodist Society, which followed immediately on the conversion of its founder, it is needful to turn back a little, and show how Wesley's ideal of a Church was met on the one hand by the teaching of that body under the influence of which he himself

passed from what he considered a mere outward simulacrum of religion, to what he believed the true position of a Christian,—on the other by an organization which only wanted the centre of one vigorous mind to form a coherent religious body such as the Methodists.

If any one nowadays were asked what he meant by a Church, he would probably reply an association of persons who have sufficient religious sympathy to worship together. But the Church had much more to do, according to the ideas of that day, than to afford opportunities of joint worship which people might avail themselves of or not as they liked. Vice and infidelity were to be put down and right doctrine was to be taught, and the discipline by which this had to be carried out was not a thing that any one who chose might reject. Something might be said in favour of such a view at that time—the Test law looked at first sight like a real instrument of discipline in the hands of the clergy, but it was in fact one which must have turned against themselves whenever they tried to use it against any but the most insignificant sinner, so that they could do very little more than to keep order than they can now. And so this whole theory was a mere make-believe: people held it, and would not examine it. In Wesley's mind, on the other hand, nothing was make-believe. Whatever he received into his intellect, he must let out in his life, and having taken up the current view of a Church he worked it out, as we have seen. When he repelled one of the best men in Savannah as a dissenter, or insisted on Baptism by immersion, he evidently felt that he was carrying out the rules of the Church of

England, and that it was the business of a clergyman to enforce them just as it was the business of a schoolmaster to enforce the rules of the school, whether they are good or bad. But his experience in Georgia must have shown him that this was impossible—in other words, that the Church of England was not all he wanted. He needed some external reflex of the inward demand for holiness stronger and more distinct than that which was implied in meetings for divine worship and for the rites of Church membership, and this external reflex was exactly presented to him by the Moravian Brotherhood.

Now the body of men whose influence on Wesley wakened him up to the conviction that he possessed only the shell of a religion were such as he believed the Church ought to be. They were joined not merely by a common creed and liturgy sufficient for the purposes of a joint worship, but by an organization which moulded them into a coherent Society. In a word, they were not a sect, but an order, a body of men, that is, recognizing duties which can be enforced by certain sanctions beyond those imposed by the laws of the country.

But there was also at this time another organization of the same kind in England which was more directly the parent of Methodism, and which has to be described here. Amid the orgies of the Restoration some young men, recoiling from the licence of the times, had formed themselves into small Societies, meeting weekly to strengthen one another with 'good discourse' and to make some efforts at doing good among the poor. The troubles of James's reign had the usual effect of political trouble upon such bodies,

at once decreasing their numbers and increasing their zeal ; while their prosperity under William increased the former, and somewhat changed the character of the latter. They acquired a proselytising and missionary character, and absorbed a good deal of what has been called above the didactic or moralizing reaction of the age. The nervous susceptibilities of the Church of England were awakened to the existence in embryo of a possible rival ; that strange and yet most accountable horror of anything organic not strictly connected with herself, with which the Methodists had later to contend, was already sufficiently manifest to draw from these bodies an apology addressed to the Bishop of London, and apparently successful in appeasing this latent jealousy. Perhaps this was still further appeased by a step taken by them about the close of the seventeenth century, when they lent their aid to legal proceedings for the suppression of vice. Any favour which was earned by this means, however, has to be set against the loss of popular sympathy which they incurred by their encouragement of informers. And considering that they could only attempt to punish the poor and insignificant, and that well-paid vice could laugh them to scorn, the loss was probably much greater than the gain. When Wesley returned from America, however, these Societies formed the natural organization for one who desired fellowship in a religious body more developed and coherent than the Church of England, and it was in these Societies that all the chief peculiarities of Methodism took their rise. The Methodist class-meeting was no more than 'the weekly conference among young communicants' recommended by the

earlier body, thereby to 'admonish and watch over one another, and to fortify each other against those temptations which assault them from the world and their own corruptions.' (Dr. Woodward's account, p. 75.) 'And these persons, knowing each other's manner of life, and their particular frailties and temptations, partly by their familiar conversation and partly from their own inward experience, can much better inspect, admonish, and guard each other than the most careful minister usually can.' Here we have an exact description of a Methodist class-meeting, written about four years before Wesley was born (1699). Like the early Methodists, too, the religious societies were distinguished by their frequent Communion, and the reverence paid by them to this rite; they had also their charitable fund, and their stewards elected yearly (who were charged with the admission of members, contingent on the approval of a majority of the Society); they also recommended fasting and self-examination, and discouraged (though but faintly) public amusements. In short, the religious societies of the seventeenth century were, in organization, a feebler and more liberal Methodism.

It was, however, only in organization that the two things were alike. The spirit of the older societies was not only unlike that of Methodism, but it was the very spirit from which Methodism was a reaction. They were distinctively *Church* bodies, and they belonged characteristically to the Church at that time; they embodied the principles of that party whose watchwords were Virtue and Vice, and who were not afraid to speak of the support of a good conscience, or of the everlasting rewards which 'were worthy of all the

care and toil which were to be spent in the pursuit of them' (Dr. Woodward). The reader will at once appreciate the chasm which phrases like these indicate between the speakers and the school of Wesley, and still more of Whitefield. The religious societies supplied only the body to Methodism, the Moravians gave it a soul; under their influence the empty vessels were again filled, but the wine was different. In 1739, Whitefield, writing to the Societies whom Woodward had anxiously vindicated from the charge of any tendency to separate from the Church, urged them neither to be confined by her Liturgy nor submissive to her rulers. This was not Wesley's language, it was language he would have condemned. But adherence to the Church was no longer the *first* condition of membership in any Society with which he was in sympathy. The birthday of a Christian was already shifted from his baptism to his conversion, and in that change the partition line of two great systems is crossed.

Neither the mechanism nor the force which gave rise to the Methodism, therefore, originated with Wesley. The mechanism existed many years before he was born, the force was supplied by the religious enthusiasm of a foreign land. The witness that the direct influence of God upon the spirit of man was not confined to a remote past or a mysterious future, but was an actual fact in the lives of all who truly deserved the name of Christian, came home to Wesley and to many others of that day as the one force that was to bind a society together, and give new life to the individual soul. This one large and simple conviction was enough to bridge over and conceal what in fact

was the wide chasm which divided Wesley from the Moravians, and for the time he gave himself up wholly to their influence. On May 1st his journal contains these words:—

‘This evening our little society at Fetter Lane began. Our fundamental rules were as follows:—

‘In obedience to the command of God, and by the advice of Peter Boehler, it is agreed among us—

‘1. That we will meet together once a week to confess our faults to each other, and pray for one another that we may be healed.

‘2. That the persons so meeting be divided into several bands, of from five to ten persons.

‘3. That every one in order speak as freely, plainly, and concisely as he can, the real state of his heart, with his several temptations and deliverances since the last meeting.

‘4. That any who desire to be admitted into the Society be asked, “What are your reasons for desiring this? Will you be entirely open, using no kind of reserve?”’

It will be observed that Peter Boehler is distinctly named in the printed rules as director. John Wesley does not appear in them at all; he is the mere seeker, promising to use entire openness, and speak freely and plainly the exact state of his heart.

Though it was not Wesley that felt that inward warmth which he hailed as the assurance of a real trust in Christ, yet we may connect the fact with his becoming a member of it. About a quarter before nine on the evening of May 24th, he tells us with his elaborate exactness, ‘While one was reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans at another

religious society, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation; an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death. I now began to pray for all who had in an especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me, and then testified openly to all there what I first felt in my heart.' It was characteristic of the man, and prophetic of the work he had to do, that he should at once utter the inmost feelings of his soul, and that this transaction of his inmost being should take place, as it were, in public.

The fact that Wesley's conversion took place under Moravian influence is one of much significance. The Society to which, without the smallest anticipations of becoming its guide, he now belonged, aimed at an external rule answering to the inward principle. It made admission the monument of every member's conversion. In separating itself from the world, and yet seeking to convert the world, it imposed on a Society the attitude of an individual Christian, and it enforced that attitude by the expulsion of all whom a severe examination revealed as having fallen away from it.

The practicability of a Christianity of this kind is curiously illustrated by Wesley's correspondence with Law, which took place during the very crisis of his conversion, and which contains the most arrogant utterance which ever proceeded from him. On May 14th, 1738, while he was waiting for the participation in the Divine nature in which he had been taught to hope, he addressed his old master in the language of stern rebuke. He had been preaching after the



model of Law's writings for years, he told him, and found that no power or peace was the result ; but when a holy man, to whom God had directed him, desired him to 'Believe in the Lord Jesus and nothing shall be impossible to him,' he was delivered from the heavy yoke of the law under which he had formerly groaned. 'This faith, indeed,' the holy man had told him, 'is the free gift of God. But seek, and thou shalt find. Strip thyself naked of thine own works and fly to Him. For whosoever cometh to Him He will in no wise cast out.' 'Now, sir,' proceeds Wesley, after quoting the words of Boehler, whom however he does not name, 'suffer me to ask, How will you answer it to our common Lord that you never gave me this advice? Why did I scarce ever hear you name the name of Christ? Never, so as to ground anything upon faith in His blood. If you say you advised other things because you knew that I had faith already, verily you knew nothing of me. I know that I had not faith, except the faith of the devil, the faith of Judas, that speculative, notional shadow, which lives in the head, not in the heart. I beseech you, sir, by the mercies of God, to consider deeply and impartially whether the true reason of your never pressing this upon me was not this—that you had it not yourself; whether that man of God was not in the right who gave this account of a late interview he had with you? "I began speaking to him of faith in Christ. He was silent. Then he began to speak of mystical matters. I spake to him of faith in Christ again. He was silent. Then he began to speak of mystical matters again. I saw his state at once." And a very dangerous one in his judgment whom

I know to have the spirit of God.' The letter concludes with a yet harsher and more direct rebuke. 'Once more, sir, let me beg you to consider, whether your extreme roughness, and morose and sour behaviour, at least on many occasions, can possibly be the fruit of a living faith in Christ? If not, may the God of peace and love fill up what is wanting in you.'

William Law was at this time a man of fifty, of acknowledged position in the world as one distinguished by a peculiar holiness. It was not in human nature for such a one to receive such a lecture from an old pupil without some stirring of painful feeling, but it would have been more dignified not to have vented this in a sneer. 'As you have written that letter in obedience to a divine call, and in conjunction with *another* extraordinary good young man whom you know to have the spirit of God, so I assure you that, considering your letter in that view, I neither desire nor dare to make the smallest defence of myself.' The letter was harsh and arrogant enough, but there was not one word in it to justify Law in the hint that his correspondent considered himself as an 'extraordinary good young man.' A true Christian meekness and a true earthly pride and mortification are strangely blended in the sentence which follows: 'As you lay claim to this character, as a messenger sent from God to lay my sins before my face, . . . so I assure you that I have not the least occasion to distrust your mission, or the least repugnance to submit myself to you both, in these exalted characters.' But the Christian meekness was soon expended. This is the whole of my answer to your letter, considered in the light which you represent it. But

now, upon supposition that you had only here acted by that ordinary light which is common to good and sober minds, I should remark upon your letter,' that he was quite content to be thought as little of a Christian as Thomas à Kempis, whom he had specially recommended to Wesley; but this is said with as little force and as much irritation as will always be found in men's words when they endeavour to satisfy at once two inconsistent impulses. The letter, with all its faults, was well worthy of Wesley's consideration; one passage of it might have saved him much subsequent error, had he laid it well to heart. 'If you had only this faith' (*i.e.* the faith of Kempis and himself) "till some weeks ago, let me advise you not to be too hasty in believing that, because you have changed your language or expressions, you have changed your faith. The head can as easily amuse itself with a living and justifying faith in the blood of Christ as with any other notion; and the heart, which you suppose to be a place of security, as being the seat of self-love is more deceitful than the head.' Words for the value of which Wesley might well have forgiven Law's sneer, if it had given him the pain to which there is no reason to believe his nature was susceptible.

Wesley's rejoinder to this letter is curious, as exhibiting many of his characteristics in their full force: it has no other interest. It is hard, logical, intense, regardless of self, regardless, too, of any other personality. It shows us a character that takes no cognizance of individuals but as 'souls to be saved.' He allows the facts of Law's letter, but disputes the inference he would draw from them. The author of

the German theology regards Christ merely as an example ; and as for Kempis, it was Law's business to have led his reader into a truer understanding of his meaning. He retorts his charge of having been kept from true faith by the advice of Law, which was 'only proper for such as had faith already.' It would have been better if Law had let the correspondence drop here, but a second, and, if we may trust a rough draft found among Law's papers, a third letter followed, carrying the discussion to the yet more useless stage of mere personal controversy. 'But if I tell you that you had conceived a dislike to me, and wanted to let me know that a man of God had shown you the poverty and misery of my state ; if I tell you that this was the main intent of your letter, you know that I tell you the truth.' Then he goes on to speak of Boehler with yet more bitterness: 'I listened to him humbly, consented to his instructing me. We parted, to all appearance friendly. He passes a sentence of condemnation on me as being in a poor miserable state, which lay open to his eyes. This *man of God* told nothing of this to myself, but goes away to another man of God, and invents and tells things as false as if he had charged me with picking his pocket. This other man of God confirms this sentence, as spoken by one who knew that he had the spirit of God.' The letter concludes with a question that perhaps gave the finishing blow to Wesley's earliest form of High Churchism : 'If you have a right to charge me with guilt for the neglect of the question you say it was my duty to have put to you, may you not much more reasonably charge them who are authoritatively

charged with you? Did the Church in which you were educated put this question to you? Did the Bishop that ordained you either deacon or priest do this for you? Did the Bishop that sent you a missionary into Georgia do this for you? Pray, sir, be at peace with me.' There is nothing in the letter to produce the peace here sought: we should gladly think it had never been sent. The correspondence terminated the intimacy between the two friends, which ended upon a harsh discord.

It will sound very odd to put forward as an excuse for Wesley that he was a man of imperturbable temper; nevertheless it is true that in certain directions what is called a very good temper needs as much allowance as a very bad one. In addressing Law in this censorious tone there is no sign that Wesley was not doing as he would be done by. His address to another was never modified by that instinctive consciousness of individual need which is hardly separable from personal sensitiveness, and every such attempt reminds us that his vocation, to communicate to a rough and brutal generation a vivid sense of the unseen, was one not compatible with keen insight and tender sympathy with particular minds. It is instructive to turn from this correspondence to a warning in the letter from Gambold quoted above: 'I will not exhort you to courage,' he says, 'for nothing that is approaching is evil. I will only mention the prejudice we shall be under if we seem the least to lay aside our universal charity and modesty of expression. Though we love some persons more than we did, let us love none less, As we cannot say that any one is destitute of divine

grace for not thinking as we do, indignation at mankind is a temper unsuitable to this cause. If we are at peace with God in Christ, let it soften our demeanour still more even towards gainsayers. What has given most offence hitherto is what perhaps may be spared, as some people's confident and hasty triumphing in the grace of God. Let us speak of every thing in such a manner as may convey glory to Christ without letting it glance at ourselves by the way. Let us profess, whenever we can with truth, how really the Christian salvation is fulfilled in us rather than how sublimely.'

While the links which bound him to his first spiritual guide were thus rudely snapped, those, not really more durable, which connected him with the body succeeding Law in this position were drawn closer than ever. His attraction to the Moravians now led him to project a visit to their settlement in Germany, in order 'that conversation with those holy men who were themselves living witnesses of the full power of faith, and yet able to bear with those that are weak, would be a means of establishing his soul.' Accordingly, on the 13th of June, having taken leave of his mother, who expressed some pain at his departure, he took boat in London for Rotterdam, and on the 4th of July he arrived at Marienborn, the abode of Count Zinzendorf, a few hours' journey from Frankfort. The journey lies through some of the most interesting parts of Germany; but the eighteenth-century pilgrim hurried through it with incurious and impatient eyes. Not that Wesley has no commendation to bestow on his route. The Dutch roads, 'as clean and smooth

as the Mall in St. James's,' bordered with walnut-trees at regular intervals, the fine gardens on the banks of the rivers, the neatness of Amsterdam, the high mountains on each side the Rhine (a significant example of his habitual exaggeration), win from him a passing word of admiration, but it is slight and incidental; and there is nothing in the journey to arrest the reader's attention before the meeting between the two men who were to hold positions so similar in the religious history of their respective countries.

These similarities, while our attention is fixed on them, appear considerable, and are worth noting, as they are perhaps, equally with their dissimilarities of character, the cause of their not suiting each other better. Like Wesley, but at a much earlier age—while a schoolboy of fifteen at Halle—Zinzendorf had been the centre of a little religious brotherhood; he at Wittenberg, like Wesley at Oxford, had been 'mocked for his singularity,' and later in life had been the subject of so much obloquy, that King Frederick William, the father of Frederick the Great, after a long interview with him, had declared that 'all the devils in hell could not have invented greater lies than had been told him of Zinzendorf.' Finally he too formed the centre of an order, and struggled against the imputation of being the founder of a sect; and the connection, in his case as in Wesley's, was not of his own seeking. Except in this particular, however, the causes which connected Zinzendorf with the Moravians were wholly unlike those which connected Wesley with the Methodists. He had postponed his strong desire of entering the Lutheran

ministry in deference to his mother's wish that he should occupy some position more suitable to his rank, and accepted a position at the Saxon Court. This sacrifice enabled him, as a person of influence, effectually to befriend the Moravian Protestants, driven by persecution from their native land; they owed their second organization to his care, and are sometimes supposed to have been a sect founded by him. A small village grew up on his estate, peopled by these exiles, who brought their own tenets and usages to their new home. Difficulties arose in the little community, the Count was more than once called upon to compose their dissensions; till by slow degrees, and by no efforts of his own, the position of director to this little body was forced upon him. The constitution drawn up on the 12th of May, and signed on the 13th of August, in the year 1727, was the result of the needs thus practically made manifest and the traditions of ancient Moravian discipline brought by some of the Brethren. The discipline was the subject of much discussion, and at one time Zinzendorf was inclined to give it up, and become absorbed in the Lutheran Church, but his usual oracle—the lot drawn from a selection of Scripture texts—bid him retain the ancient ways; and the Herrnhutters were distinguished by that peculiar arrangement of life of which a modified form was reflected in Methodism. The community had its difficulties from without as well as from within; the suspicion and jealousy which it awakened is commemorated in a royal commission issued more than once to inquire into its doctrine and practice. But



its enemies obtained no triumph thereby ; the result was that the congregation at Herrnhut, 'as long as it shall continue true to the Augsburg Confession,' was to be left undisturbed. The head of this little body was not equally fortunate. On refusing in 1737 to sign a paper which he read as a tacit avowal of disorderly proceedings, he was banished from Saxony, according to the original sentence, for ever,—the sentence was in fact remitted at the end of ten years ; and it was in consequence of this that Wesley paid a separate visit to the community and to its director.

Few fragments of biography would be more interesting than a full description of the first meeting between John Wesley and Count Zinzendorf, but the meagre account which is all that is given us in Wesley's published journal merely informs us of the fact of their meeting, of the Count's preaching on the following Sunday, and addressing a 'conference for strangers' on the subject of justification 'largely and scripturally,' but not altogether in a manner which coincided with Peter Bohler's teaching or Wesley's own convictions. The meeting, we should gather, was somewhat flat. Wesley says that here he continually met with what he sought for, 'persons saved from inward as well as outward sin by the love of God shed abroad in their hearts,' but he does not include his host in this description, indeed he hardly mentions him at all. The following letter will show, however, that if Zinzendorf did not attract much of Wesley's sympathy, the little community which he had gathered round him excited it in the highest degree. 'God has given me at

length the desire of my heart,' he writes to his brother Samuel from Marienborn. 'I am with a Church whose conversation is in heaven, in whom is the mind that was in Christ, and who so walk as He walked. Oh how high and holy a thing Christianity is! and how widely distinct from that—I know not what—which is so called, though it neither purifies the heart nor renews the life, after the image of our blessed Redeemer! I grieve to think how that holy Name by which we are called must be blasphemed among the heathen when they see Christians judging one another, ridiculing one another, speaking evil of one another, increasing instead of bearing one another's burdens. How bitterly would Julian have applied to these: "See how these Christians love one another!" I know,' he continues, with a graduated candour which is somewhat amusing, 'that I myself, I doubt you sometimes, *my sister often*, have been under this condemnation. Oh may God grant we may never more think to do Him service by breaking those commands which are the very life of His religion!'

The absence of all attraction in Zinzendorf for Wesley, when compared with the strong attraction presented to him by Peter Boehler, is a fact not explained to us by anything we know of the two men, for the commonplace view which has been put forward, that it was due to Wesley's intolerance of a rival, will surely not be held by any one who has followed the foregoing narrative, and has marked how every action of the earlier period of his life, when arrogance and ambition are most in season, was performed at the bidding or advice of another. On the

other hand, it is evident that the impression made by Zinzendorf on other Englishmen was altogether favourable. Doddridge describes him as 'a gentleman of a most graceful person, a sweet majestic aspect, perfectly well-bred, and exceedingly agreeable in his manners and conversation.' This was written during the previous year, when Zinzendorf was in England, and on this occasion he had been so much attracted to the brother who was to John Wesley 'as his own soul' as to ask him to come and see him every day, an impression not likely to be altogether one-sided. We have seen how close was the sympathy between Gambold and Wesley, and Gambold writes of Zinzendorf in the following terms:—

'The Count of Zinzendorf has been traduced as an impostor, enthusiast, &c. and he certainly has in him something very unlike other people. But what is it? A very tender and deep-rooted love to our blessed Redeemer, and the highest and most honourable conceptions of His atonement. . . . And all the hearty expressions to the honour of Jesus that are found in ancient hymns or meditations of pious divines (which, because mankind do not always keep up to the same strain of truth, are unjustly looked upon as flights and raptures) were with him serious principles. He is distrustful of himself, extremely moderate towards those against whom he might be expected to be sharp, and not at all fond of power.'

Some of Zinzendorf's fine qualities, indeed, Wesley was quite incapable of appreciating. He was liberal beyond anything that Wesley could have sympathised with; Roman Catholics were among his intimate

friends ; and in answer to the question of a Unitarian as to Zinzendorf's opinion of his chance of salvation, he told him that he did not forget that all manner of sin and blasphemy against the Son would be forgiven. But we should have thought Wesley equally incapable, at least at this time, of appreciating a touch of effeminacy which strikes the English reader as a defect in Zinzendorf's religion and character, and with this exception we hear of nothing else likely to repel him. We can only discern that Wesley felt from the first that their ideals of the Christian life were different, and suppose that the very similarity of the outward framework of that life was the means of so early bringing out this difference.

His visit to the community at Herrnhut seems to have been an occasion of greater satisfaction to him than that which preceded it. It was on the 1st of August that he reached the village on the border of Bohemia where the Moravian Brotherhood had found their home and centre, and from which they sometimes take their name of Herrnhutters. Though consisting of only about a hundred houses, it presented an appearance of some regularity, and indeed monotony, the rows of small plain buildings being unvaried by any pretensions to architectural dignity on the one hand, or picturesque poverty on the other, and Zinzendorf's own house being only distinguished by the large garden behind it, 'not for show, but for use.' One of these houses was set apart for the reception of strangers, and here Wesley spent ten days, in the fullest intercourse with different members of the brotherhood. The Moravian was not dependent on the accident of birth or marriage for companionship ;

the elaborate organization of the Society gave every member a place in a class consisting of his or her own sex, age, and condition (the married and unmarried being arranged separately), each class being broken up into little local groups furnished each with their appropriate officers, male or female—censors, monitors, almoners, and servants. Besides these officers there was a hierarchy, consisting of a superintendent over every class and every set of classes, a group of teachers, of deacons, and of attendants on the sick. A cross division separated these classes into ‘bands,’ meeting twice or thrice a week, for mutual confession and common prayer, while it was the office of the censors and monitors to be the channel of rebuke to all—the ultimate sanction of their code, after attendance at the Lord’s Supper had been prohibited in vain, being banishment from the Society. A further classification grouped the Brethren according to their spiritual state, ‘some being dead, who are visited every day,’ as the extract from the constitution quaintly puts it. The separation of the sexes was carried so far that only one or two of the male officers ever spoke with the women, female teachers, helpers, censors, &c. replacing them with those of their own sex; and the distinction was even carried out in the graveyard, where the mortal remains of men and women, of married and unmarried, were laid side by side in a well-kept garden, from which every appearance of gloom was carefully banished. The rigid order of the community recalled the convent, but nothing was to be found here of conventual indolence: superintendents were chosen for every department of secular work, and the routine of life

was arranged with such strict economy of time as to leave sixteen hours remaining after all other demands of soul and body were satisfied. 'I cannot see how it is possible for this community to avoid growing immensely rich,' wrote Wesley of this community more than forty years later, when he had long been separated from them. They were remote from conventional life in another particular: marriage was held by them in peculiar honour; and little as the arrangements above mentioned would appear to further conjugal happiness, the tranquil and harmonious life seems to have been uninterrupted by any unhappy marriages. The general impression is of a quiet, childlike, joyous religion, devoid of all gloom, and of all awe.

The methodical plan of life arranged in this community, and repeated with strange exactness, perhaps owing rather to identity of impulse than to any direct imitation, in that which was to find its centre in Wesley, had apportioned a part of the day as well as a particular place for intercourse with strangers; and, in the late afternoon of those sultry August days, he heard from one and another of the Moravians the narratives of that supernatural change in their own lives which he had so lately deemed impossible, and which he now regarded as the one supreme fact of life. The poor carpenters, tailors, and cutlers who laid open to Wesley their religious histories could not of course speak Latin, but the strange gutturals were becoming familiar, and where his knowledge of German failed a Latin translator was at hand to interpret. Wesley was more nearly related to those German peasants than to his countrymen of the present day. The

upheaval of religion in England to which Methodism is owing, was the result of some subterranean wave of feeling not restrained within the limits of any particular nation.

The member of this brotherhood whose influence upon Wesley appears to have been most lively at this time was the first planter of the Church at Herrnhut, a carpenter by trade, formerly a Roman Catholic, Christian David. Besides his religious biography, Wesley has thought it worth while to give us an extract from a sermon of his which made so great an impression upon him that he wrote it down afterwards from recollection. 'Here is a mystery, here the wise men of the world are lost. It is foolishness unto them, sin is the only thing that divides men from God. Sin (let him that heareth understand) is the only thing that unites them to God,—that is, the only thing which moves the Lamb of God to have compassion upon and by His blood to give them access to the Father. This then do, if you will lay a right foundation. Go straight to God with all your ungodliness. Tell Him, "Thou, whose eyes are as a flame of fire scorching the heart, seest that I am ungodly. I plead nothing else. I do not say I am contrite, but I am ungodly. Therefore bring me to Him that justifieth the ungodly. Let Thy blood be the propitiation for me. For there is nothing in me but ungodliness."''

This extract is valuable both as explaining the influence of the Moravians upon Wesley and his subsequent misunderstanding of and recoil from their doctrine. He felt now, with all the vividness of a sudden discovery which startles the mind by its simplicity, that the sense of need was all that was necessary for the

soul to bring to God ; and any utterance of this truth, even one which implied that a virtuous life was a disadvantage in the eyes of God, came home to him with the utmost power. He would never probably have denied this truth, but it took so different a proportion in his mind after the separation from the Moravians that it seemed to them he had ceased to believe it.

Even thus early there was a seed of dissatisfaction in his mind towards them. After his return to England, which he reached on September 16th, he wrote to Zinzendorf, thanking him warmly for his hospitality to him, and telling him how reluctantly he had quitted so soon the society of 'the Christians who love one another;' but adding, 'I hope to see them at least once more, he says, were it only to give them the fruit of my love by speaking freely on a few things which I did not approve, perhaps because I did not understand them.' What some of these 'few things' were we gather from the conclusion of his letter, where he desires 'that God would make Zinzendorf to abound more and more in all lowliness, faith, and love, *particularly towards those who are without.*' The charge here implied is repeated by Wesley in after years, with how much justice it is not very easy to say. The Moravians were not in one sense wanting to those who were without : they were very successful missionaries. Perhaps what Wesley meant was true while the censure with which he associated it was false. The Moravians were certainly not like the Methodists, an *aggressive* brotherhood. They sought to preach Christianity where it had never been heard of, but they did not, like Wesley, endeavour to bring all who called themselves Christians to the particular



attitude which they took up themselves. It would have been a misfortune in this case if either society could have imposed its own aims on the other. Wesley's work in life was quite distinct from anything that he could have performed as a member of the United Brethren ; nothing is to be regretted in their separation but that confusion of a special vocation with a universal duty without which alloy perhaps no society of men were ever firmly welded together.

## CHAPTER VII.

### WHITEFIELD THE FIELD PREACHER.

WHITEFIELD, and not Wesley, is the prominent figure in the opening of the Methodist drama, which occupies the winter of 1738-39. The notices of this 'new sect,' which in a year of opening war surprise us by their frequency, are all concerned with him. Wesley's was the strongest, but it was also the less impetuous nature, and in the earlier stages of any movement it is impulse and not weight that produces the most effect. In one sense Wesley may be called his pupil: in one of the distinctive features of Methodism, field preaching, he did no more than follow the example of one whom he addressed at times as a spiritual son. Nor was it a novelty when Whitefield, yielding to the current of events, first sought a wider scope for the enormous audiences attracted by his preaching. Howell Harris, a young Welsh layman, who had been twice refused ordination, had preceded him in this path by three or four years, and had had predecessors in his turn; but Whitefield is the first conspicuous instance of religious addresses in the open air.

He arrived in London on December 8, 1738, after a year in Georgia which affords a striking contrast to

the Wesleys' sojourn there. It was at the request of the men who had driven them from America that he was appointed their minister (an office for which he declined any salary); and but for the necessity of obtaining priest's Orders, and collecting money for the Orphan House he sought to found in Georgia, he would, he says, have remained perfectly happy in his 'little foreign cure.' The Trustees for Georgia received him most cordially, being no doubt delighted to find that a religious man could visit the colony without setting it in a flame. But his reception was not equally favourable on all sides; five pulpits were closed against him in two days, some of the religious societies were bitter against him, and Gibson, Bishop of London, asked him during an interview, which however Whitefield describes as friendly, whether his published journals 'were not a little tinctured with enthusiasm.' It is difficult to select any one word habitually used in our day which shall express all the unreasoning dislike roused by the term 'enthusiasm' in the eighteenth century. It meant to them much what fanaticism means to us, but suggested darker associations even than those which we recall at the name of a fanatic. In spite of this aspersion Whitefield found warm partisans in England, and tells us that he was received at Bristol, where he went to visit his relations, with 'inexpressible joy;' while it was here that the opposition of the clergy first opened to him the ground he was to make his own, and drove him to preach in the fields.

On first coming to Bristol, Whitefield had been promised the use of Redcliffe church, but when it came to the point the clergyman who had made the

promise discovered that he could not keep it without an order from the Chancellor. Whitefield went to procure this order, but received only the advice to leave Bristol 'and not to preach, till he heard from the Bishop.' 'Why?' asked Whitefield, very reasonably. 'Why will you press so hard upon me?' said the Chancellor; 'the thing has given general dislike.' 'When was the Gospel preached without dislike?' asked Whitefield, and the Chancellor does not seem to have had anything to say in reply. The perplexed irresolution of the clergy in face of this new body of missionaries is still more vividly brought before us by an interview with the Dean, which followed: Whitefield asked for permission to preach for his Orphan House in Georgia, and the Dean, after a considerable pause, said 'he could not tell;' and then took advantage of a welcome interruption to get rid of his inconvenient visitor. 'Mr. Whitefield, I will give you an answer some other time; now I expect company.' Whitefield's attempt to have this more convenient season fixed was of course a failure. Some pulpits were open to him for a time, and there is no trace of any disorder among the eager crowds who thronged to hear him; but the authorities were disturbed—the mere fact of a sermon exciting strong interest, apparently, was thought dangerous. The Chancellor of Bristol sent for Whitefield, and asked him, 'By what authority he preached in Bristol without a licence?' 'I thought that custom was grown obsolete,' said Whitefield. 'Why, sir, did you not ask the clergyman this question who preached for you last Thursday?' 'That is nothing to you,' replied the Chancellor.

The clergy, whether willing or unwilling, were under the influence of the ecclesiastical authorities, and Whitefield was from this time shut out of the churches. He turned to those who, if he had continued to preach in a church, had no chance of hearing him whatever. About four miles north-east of Bristol lies a wild common, once, as its name of Kingswood intimates, a royal chace, inhabited at that day by a race of wild fierce savages whose name was a terror to the inhabitants of Bristol. This feeling had been revived with special vividness by riots in which the colliers had taken part in the previous autumn, at which, says the *Political State* for 1738, 'they played such mad pranks one would doubt whether there were still any laws in being.' 'If he will convert the heathen,' it was said of Whitefield before his journey to Georgia, 'let him try his hand upon the Kingswood colliers.' It was on February the 17th, 1739, that Whitefield first attempted to address this wild race. He began with an audience of about a hundred colliers, staring we may suppose with stupid curiosity at the eccentric stranger who came among them to speak of matters as strange to them as the account of a new world. The hundred grimy listeners increased to twenty thousand; the stupid curiosity was replaced by an emotion manifested by the tears which left 'white gutters,' according to Whitefield's description, 'in their black cheeks.' His effect upon them is attested by more valuable memorials than tears. When he quitted Bristol some months later, a swarthy retinue attended him out of the town, and, leading him through Kingswood, stopped him to partake of an 'entertainment' they had provided for him, at which he received subscriptions,

astonishing him by their liberality, for a charity school to be established among them. Together with this admiration we meet with instances of that strong animosity which later on issued in anti-Methodist riots. He was disturbed one day when preaching in Bristol by a violent hallooing behind him, owing, he afterwards found, to a drunken 'gentleman' offering money to any that would pelt him, but with a result precisely opposite to that he desired, as the stones of the rabble were turned against himself. Whitefield was very indignant with his partisans when he found what they had done, and went to call upon his enemy, whom he found ashamed and penitent, and who, like most others who came in contact with him, seems to have felt the influence of a simple and unselfish nature.

The Kingswood colliers were not exceptional in their appreciation of Whitefield's preaching. On his return to London, on the 29th of April, 1739, he addressed enormous crowds of the lowest class of the population in Moorfields, then a peninsula of open country left in the heart of the city, surrounded by the dwellings of the very poor. Many had told him he would not return alive; but, encouraged perhaps by the result of similar anticipations respecting his Kingswood enterprise, he disregarded their warnings, and went to this 'stronghold of Satan,' as he called it, attended only by two friends, soon forced from him by the pressure of the crowd, to which, however, he preached not only without molestation, but with signs of careful respect. His evening audience at Kennington Common was equally attentive and respectful. 'All joined in the psalm and Lord's Prayer so regularly that I scarce ever

preached with more quietness in a church.' Whitefield's audience embraced the two extreme sections of society. At Kingswood he drew tears from rough savages, who found their seats in the trees; at Blackheath he interested polite ladies and gentlemen, who drove to hear him in their carriages. His addresses at Kingswood and at Moorfields have been conveniently grouped together, but it was a few days before his first sermon at Moorfields that he addressed a genteel crowd in the open air. He heard after one of his sermons that nearly a thousand people had stood out in the churchyard, and that many hundreds had gone away disappointed. The simple and natural suggestion which immediately occurred—why should he not preach in a place where none need go away disappointed?—was, in spite of his experience at Kingswood, treated by the friends to whom he mentioned it as 'a mad notion.' 'We knelt down and prayed,' he says, 'that nothing might be done rashly.' There was certainly no impatience in taking the step which was the symbol of his opposition to the Church of that day. He did not preach in the open air in London till the 27th of April, when, having gone to preach at Islington at the request of the vicar, and being, in spite of this invitation, denied access to the pulpit by the churchwardens, he preached in the churchyard. It was not by the desire of the congregation that he was shut out of the pulpit. On one occasion the pew-opener took the bold step of locking the pew where a rival preacher sat waiting for the conclusion of prayers to take possession of the pulpit. Urgent requests were brought to him several times during the service to desist from forcing his sermon down the throats of the congregation,

who were eager to hear Whitefield ; but a stern sense of duty, by his own account, compelled him to disregard them all. One can imagine how the poor man sat swelling with rage in his locked pew through the sermon of which he was an enforced auditor. It does not appear that Whitefield was in the least to blame in this affair ; he may even not have known of the imprisonment of his rival ; but of course a very slight distortion of the story could be made to tell powerfully against him, and the clergy were doubtless not better friends to him after hearing it. As the summer advanced, this immense popularity only increased, and the very utterances of his enemies served no doubt in their obvious calumny—one story about him was that he had been imprisoned and whipped in Georgia for driving people mad with enthusiasm—only to augment the feeling in his favour. Such crowds thronged the river stairs when he was to preach at Kennington that the watermen were obliged to put on a large number of additional boats above the usual Sunday allowance, and had the greatest difficulty in keeping their wherries from being overcrowded by the fine ladies who pressed into them : it was necessary to prosecute one who had carried more than his legal fare. On the 1st of April a wit unknown to fame had taken the opportunity of sending these crowds to Bow on a fruitless errand, thus affording us perhaps the most decisive evidence of the space Whitefield at this time filled in the eyes of others than those who cared for the salvation of their souls. The Methodists were indeed by this time one of the principal topics of the public press ; and even the iniquities of the Spaniards, by which the nation had been lashed into



fury, were for the moment thrown into the shade by the sudden success of these strolling preachers, who actually made people sit in the open air to listen to them. Long before Whitefield preached at Moorfields the Methodists were the centre of public attention. The irregularity of the *manner* of their address was a small thing; what gave offence was its substance. The vehement sense of reality in these declarations of danger and of hope, the presentation of the new birth not as a metaphor or as an event confined to the first ages of Christianity, but as the one transcendent reality of life, was to the men of that day an offence we can hardly conceive, except by substituting something quite different as its cause.

‘The Methodists are the topic now the *Weekly Miscellany* has written against them,’ writes John Byrom, a writer whose mediocre verses were read in that day, and whose journal is valuable in our own. The *Weekly Miscellany* was the religious journal of that time; and in this article, which was disseminated with much zeal, the keynote of Church antagonism is given with entire distinctness. ‘These rash pretenders, who thunder out damnation at random, without study, experience, thought, or judgment, deserve punishment much more than ignorant licentiates merit the censure of the college for their malpractices; and as far as any of us by all fair means endeavour to prevent the havoc they make amongst weak people, we are so far answerable for the ruin of families as to their temporal welfare and peace of mind.’ This was the tone of all the clergy of that day; with the exception of the Vicar of Islington, Mr. Stonehouse, all closed their pulpits to the Methodists. Nor was

this a result of the physical disorder afterwards produced by their preaching. On February the 3d, the date of the extract given above, none of the cries and convulsions produced by Wesley's preaching had yet appeared: we are left to imagine what that havoc was of which the *Miscellany* complains. The results would appear to have been at least valuable in an economic point of view, to judge from a notice of some weeks later in the *Political State*, by which we learn that several 'ladies who used to wear French silks and French hoops of four yards wide, *tête de mouton* heads (a kind of wig), and white satin smock petticoats, are now turned Methodists and followers of Mr. Whitefield, whose idea of the new birth has so prevailed over them *that*'—what does the reader think?—'they now wear plain stuff gowns, no hoops, common night mobs, and plain bays for underclothes' (May 6th). The word Methodist must by this time have acquired a meaning entirely conventional, for no one would have chosen it to describe the proceedings of the erratic and unmethodical Whitefield, and indeed it seems used now as an equivalent to an enthusiast. 'A visit from a Methodist, or some other original genius, I suppose, fills up the rest of your morning,' writes a correspondent to the gentle and mystical Byrom, who never had much sympathy with either Whitefield or John Wesley. Through the pages of his journal we catch strange vivid glimpses of the new sect arising to absorb such enthusiastic admiration and such hostility, the more valuable because Byrom regarded them through the medium of neither. 'I cannot praise, and I will not condemn them,' he said to the young Vicar of Islington, their only

strong partisan in the Church at this time. They formed the talk of coffee-houses and clubs. Here apparently their enemies chiefly predominated. 'At Abington's,' he writes, 'there was a Bedfordshire attorney furious with the Methodists because they had spoiled his clerk;' and here he heard it settled that 'Law's Christian Perfection was at the bottom of their scheme.' There was no contempt in Byrom's nature, but his allusion to the 'lords, dukes, &c.' who crowded to hear Whitefield at Blackheath and give guineas for his Orphan House is certainly not respectful. 'While at Hutton's' (the bookseller), he writes on June 28th, 'came in the so-much-talked-of Mr. Whitefield; he stayed a quarter of an hour taking leave of his friends, and then the Cirencester coach called, and he went to Gloucester. It was proposed to sing a hymn, but the coach came and interrupted it. He has a world of people that like him: I am surprised at the progress he has made.' One discerns very distinctly the shrinking of a gentle refined nature from this bustling preacher with his crowd of admirers, and on the other hand the utter want of a sense of the incongruous betrayed by this demand for a hymn at a shop-door while waiting for a stage-coach.

The foregoing extracts present us with a view of the great Methodist orator as he appeared to the newspaper-reading world, and to the man of thought, athirst for a spiritual religion. We may supplement these two sketches with a third, proceeding from the orthodox Dissenters, and probably fairly representing the feeling of the temperate religious world as to these new manifestations. The following extract is taken from Doddridge's correspondence, where it

appears from the pen of a dissenting minister, the Rev. John Barker. 'I still think the Methodists are sincere,' he writes on May 24th, 'and I hope they may do good. I saw Mr. Whitefield preaching at Kennington Common last week to an attentive multitude, and heard much of him at Bath; but, supposing him sincere, I still fancy that he is but a *weak* man, much too positive and bold and enthusiastic. I am glad to hear of piety, prayer, reformation, and anything that looks like real holiness in north, east, south, or west, and that any real good is done to the souls of men; but whether these Methodists are in the right way, whether they are warrantable in all their conduct, whether poor people should be urged to pray from four in the morning till eleven at night, is' (mark the caution of the man!) 'not clear to me, and I am still less satisfied with the high pretences they make to Divine influence. I think what Mr. Whitefield says and does comes but little short of the assumption of inspiration or infallibility.' Whitefield had much intercourse with the Dissenters at this time, but the only effect was seen in his bringing back a few to the Church.

It was thus by no pre-arranged scheme or sudden impulse, but by a simple yielding to the prompting of external events, that a life of field-preaching and of itinerancy became familiar to Whitefield. A widespread popularity called him to different parts of England; and, as no link to the parochial system bound him to any particular spot, these journeys, suited as they were to his erratic impetuous nature, developed into a fixed system of continual movement, if anything can be called fixed in a nature so mobile as his.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### WESLEY THE CONFESSOR.

WHILE Whitefield was thus absorbing all the attention the polite world had to spare for religious oratory, and all the interest a class unknown to the polite world had to give to a message from the Invisible, Wesley, as the channel of this new influence to individual spirits, was exercising an influence not less important in its intensity than Whitefield's in its wide diffusion. He was at this time solely—what throughout his life he was chiefly—the confessor and director of those whom the spiritual fermentation of the day had roused to a sudden, and yet often enduring, sense of unseen realities; while Whitefield was never more than a means of awakening this sense, and that rather in his action on the masses than in individual communion. Judging from the character of the two men, we might have been inclined to exchange the parts that each had to play. The affectionate sympathetic heart might appear best suited to the confessor—the hard impersonal strength of will and decision of intellect to the missionary; but it is not really to the gentle, the strongly personal character, that a troubled spirit turns for guidance. The less individuality mingles in the direction that

is given, the more an anxious conscience is satisfied with a sense of being in contact with the immobility of law; and if hardness mingles with this impersonality, it will not be less welcome to one who is craving after guidance with that hunger for asceticism that accompanies a sudden recoil from the world. For persons at this stage of their religious career Wesley was exactly fitted, even by his least amiable qualities; and though not equally prominent with Whitefield, in the eyes of the external world, he was already the centre of the Methodist Society. The meetings at Fetter Lane and elsewhere presented him with a congenial sphere, and his authority, though not yet clearly defined, was more and more generally acknowledged. Some letters from those who had accepted him as their spiritual director, inserted in his journal at this time, enable us vividly to realize the extent of this supremacy. We may take an example from those cases which Wesley would regard as satisfactory and unsatisfactory conversion. 'My dear friend,' writes one whom he would doubtless number among the former class, 'bear with my relating in what way I was born of God. It was an instantaneous act. My whole heart was filled with a divine power, drawing all the faculties of my soul after Christ, which continued three or four nights and days. It was a mighty rushing wind coming into the soul, enabling me from that moment to be more than conqueror over those corruptions which before I was always a slave to. Since that time the whole bent of my will hath been towards Him day and night, even in my dreams. I know that I dwell in Christ, and Christ in me. I am bone of His bone, and flesh of

His flesh.' The self-examination of another, modelled on a form Wesley had used for himself, supplies us with a specimen he doubtless thought less promising. 'I still hanker,' he confesses, 'after creature happiness; my soul is almost continually running out after one creature or another, and imagining how happily I could be in such a condition. I have more pleasure in eating and drinking, and in the company of those I love, than I have in God. I have a relish for earthly happiness, I have not a relish for heavenly. My desires are not all new. My great desire is to have Christ formed in my heart by faith. But little desires are continually stealing into my soul. My passions and inclination are mixed, having something of Christ and something of earth. I love you, for instance. But my love is only partly spiritual and partly natural. Something of my own cleaves to that which is of God.' The comparative interest which the reader feels in those two letters probably exactly inverts Wesley's.

Such intercourse as this formed the most absorbing occupation of Wesley's time and thought during the winter of 1738-39. His repute as a person of exalted holiness was now so high that his prayers were entreated February 9, 1739, for a lunatic: 'that the Lord would be pleased to heal him as He did in the days of His flesh,' as the father of the child entreated in a pathetic letter which he wrote to Wesley. His intercession was only to a small degree efficacious; but, from the time Wesley prayed with the parents, the child, he says, had more rest. It was at Newgate that his ministrations met with their most wonderful success. 'On Wednesday,' he writes

November 3, 1739, 'my brother and I went at their earnest desire to do the last good office to the condemned malefactors. It was the most glorious instance I ever saw of faith triumphing over sin and death. On observing the tears run fast down the cheeks of one of them I asked him, "How do you feel your heart now?" He calmly replied, "I feel a peace which I could not have believed to be possible, and I know it is the peace of God which passeth all understanding.'" It is characteristic of Wesley's view of Christianity that this should be a fit temper in which a condemned malefactor should meet death. The whole human race were, in his view, in the position of condemned criminals; and among those who deserved hell it was hardly practicable or necessary to establish the further distinction of those who also deserved the gallows.

Yet, in spite of the qualities which attracted such reverence, there were those to whom Wesley's state was unsatisfactory. Charles Delamotte, a friend who had been with him in Germany, and had joined the Moravians, paid him a long visit at the close of 1738, and expressed deep disquiet at his state. 'You are only better than you were at Savannah in this,' he tells him; 'you know you were then quite wrong, but you are not right yet. You know that you were then blind, but you do not see now. I doubt not but God will bring you to the right foundation, but I have no hope for you while you are on your present foundation; you have all to begin anew. I have observed all your words and actions, and I see you are of the same spirit still. You have a simplicity, but it is a simplicity of your own, it is not the simplicity of



Christ. You think you do not trust in your own works, but you do trust in your own works, you do not believe in Christ. You have a present freedom from sin, but it is only a temporary suspension of it, not a deliverance from it. And you have a peace, but it is not a true peace. If death were to approach, you would find all your fears return. But I am forbidden to say more: my heart sinks in me like a stone.' These words probably (for we have too little of the context to form more than a doubtful opinion) contain the prophecy of Wesley's separation from the Moravians. Wesley was consoled in the trouble this warning occasioned him by opening his Testament on the words, 'My hour is not yet come.'

As yet it does not appear that the divergence between the twin leaders of this movement had made itself at all visible. On hearing that Whitefield had arrived in London on December the 11th, 1738, Wesley had hurried to London to meet him, and 'God gave us once more to take sweet counsel together.' It was not a little to the credit of Whitefield that the meeting was so satisfactory. Wesley's inconsiderate and arrogant behaviour in directing him to give up his voyage to Georgia might, had Whitefield been less genial or more sensitive, have antedated their divergence by some years; but we find no trace of any diminished affection or confidence between the two men at their first meeting; and when the Fetter Lane Society began the new year (1739) with a 'love-feast'—a meal of bread and water eaten in company, with prayer, belonging to the Moravian discipline—the bread broken in common seemed a fit symbol of their oneness of hope and aim. 'About three in the morn-

ing, as we were continuing instant in prayer,' writes Wesley, 'the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and fell to the ground.' 'It was a Pentecostal season indeed,' says Whitefield. His conspicuous position in the early stage of the Society was no eyesore to Wesley; there was never between the Methodist leaders anything of the jealousy which characterized their adherents. A smaller mind might have felt somewhat sore at being thus cast into the shade. But Wesley's most important actions at this time were to be performed under the guidance of his old pupil. Early in March he received a letter from Whitefield at Bristol, urging, with all his characteristic eagerness, his friend's speedy presence there. The discussions about this journey present us with a curious specimen of the weak part of his character. His brother was strongly opposed to his going, he had himself some reluctance to the journey; and the doubts arising from this conflict of opinions were ended by his usual method, opening the Bible at hazard, and regarding the passage on which his eyes first fell as an indication to him of the will of God. There are so very few pages in the Bible on which the eye may not unconsciously select some text that has a kind of relevance to almost any action, that we are rather surprised to find Wesley was not led in this bibliomancy to something more to the purpose than the 'remarkable scriptures' which he sets down without comment, considering, apparently, that their striking appropriateness will speak for itself. One may be taken as a specimen, the rest are about as relevant. 'And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem.'

The points of striking analogy between Bristol and Jerusalem, or between Ahaz and John Wesley, were supposed to be sufficiently apparent to the reader to need no comment. As Wesley did not on this occasion sleep with his fathers, he supposes that this and several other texts which had a reference to somebody's dying were permitted for a trial of his faith. It was not only to John that these passages from Scripture, torn from the context as they were, bore the aspect of a Divine message. His brother, who had been deeply moved at the prospect of Ahaz sleeping with his fathers, and other 'remarkable scriptures,' felt shut off from all remonstrance by opening the Bible on the words, 'Son of man, behold I take from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke, yet thou shalt not mourn or weep, neither shall thy tears run down.' This method of consulting the Bible was Moravian in origin. Zinzendorf had chosen the same method of deciding whether the Herrnhutters were to maintain the Moravian discipline or be absorbed in the Lutheran Church.

Wesley set forth to confront the death which he believed to await him at Bristol on the 30th of April, and on the following day, a Sunday, he heard Whitefield preach in the open air, a means of address he did not now confine to the Kingswood colliers. It is interesting to observe how reluctantly he (Wesley) lost sight one after another of the landmarks of the Church of England. Preaching on unconsecrated ground he evidently felt was a distinct mark of a foreign territory. 'I could scarce reconcile myself,' he writes, 'at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields of which he (Whitefield) set me an example on Sunday,

having been all my life, till very lately, so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church.' It was, however, a phase which was left behind him now, however unwillingly: on the following day he began expounding the Bible to one of that network of societies which, like ditches dug to irrigate the soil, were everywhere ready throughout the country for the influx of enthusiasm which Methodism was to pour into them. He chose for the subject of his exposition the Sermon on the Mount. 'This,' he remarks in his journal, 'was one pretty remarkable precedent of field-preaching, though I suppose at that time there were churches also;' and the next day he acted on the spirit of this remark in preaching from a slight hill in the suburbs of Bristol, on the text which he remarks is fulfilled in every true minister of Christ, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor.' About 3,000 people, he says, formed his audience, some perhaps, as at least was the case with Whitefield's hearers, seated on the leafless trees. And the open fields during the two months which Wesley stayed in this neighbourhood were the scenes of his largest congregations, probably also of his most vigorous exhortations. He also preached at the Societies, but we hear of no more sermons in a church at this time; the only consecrated building here open to him was the chapel at Newgate (in Bristol), where he daily read the morning service of the Church. It is important to take note of this fact at this time; a slight confusion of chronology would confuse our apprehension

on salvation by faith he changed colour, and fell into violent convulsions. 'This is he whom I said was a deceiver of the people, but God has overtaken me,' was the exclamation with which Wesley was greeted on entering his room.

Once a woman, feeling this strange agitation coming upon her, ran out of the meeting that she might not give vent to it in public; but so powerful was the mysterious influence to which she was a prey that she sank down in the street, and was forced to be carried home, where Wesley found her the next day in a violent agony, which was removed by his prayers. Some of the cases reported by Wesley are painful to read, but the wild ravings he has chronicled never failed under the influence of his prayers to give way to peace and calm.

The worst case was that of an illiterate girl, at Kingswood, apparently taken ill at her own house. 'It was a terrible sight,' he says, describing his reception. 'Anguish, horror, and despair above all description appeared in her pale face; the thousand distortions of her body showed how the dogs of hell were gnawing her heart. The shrieks intermixed were scarce to be endured, but her stony eyes could not weep. She screamed out as soon as words could find their way, "I am damned, damned, lost for ever! Six days ago you might have helped me, but it is past: I am the devil's now, I have given myself to him, I will be his, I will serve him, I will go with him to hell!" She then began praying to the devil. We began—

"Arm of the Lord, awake, awake."

She immediately sunk down as asleep, but as soon

as we left off broke out again with inexhaustible vehemence, "Stony hearts, break ! I am a warning to you. Break, break, poor stony hearts ! I am damned that you may be saved ; you need not be damned, though I must." We interrupted her by calling upon God, on which she sank down as before, and another young woman began to roar out as she had done. We continued in prayer till past eleven, when God in a moment spoke peace unto the soul, first of the first tormented, and then of the other, and they both joined in singing praises to Him who had stilled the enemy and the avenger.' It is somewhat surprising to hear that, after this result from his ministrations, he was unwilling to obey the next summons to another young woman, taken ill at the Society. He opened his Testament on the words, 'I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth.' He went to the girl, who was held down on the ground by three or four persons, her violent convulsions taxing their utmost efforts to hold her still. 'She began screaming before I came into the room, then broke out into a horrid laugh, mixed with blasphemy grievous to hear. My brother coming in, she called out, "Preacher, field preacher, I don't love field preaching." This was repeated two hours together, with spitting and all the expressions of strong aversion.' This was the second visit in one day, and the following noon saw Wesley again by the bedside of the *convulsionnaire* : the crisis was now passed, and 'all her pangs ceased in a moment. She was filled with peace, and knew that the son of wickedness had departed from her.' The rest of this spiritual physician, however, was but short. A relapse in one of the Kingswood women

called him there on the morrow, and he seems to have connected some supernatural insight with her words, 'Yonder comes Wesley, galloping as hard as he can' (he being still three miles off), a piece of witchery which might generally be repeated whenever a doctor has been sent for. This case issued in many others, for an unwise observer of the scene, whom Southey is probably mistaken in identifying with Wesley himself, addressed the demon whom he believed to be the occasion of the woman's agony thus, 'I command thee in the name of the Lord Jesus to tell if thou hast commission to torment any other soul;' and of course the two women mentioned in answer were attacked a few days afterwards, while Wesley was speaking at a private house where they were. These attacks, which were very much like those described, seem to have been about the last, and the whole space occupied by these violent agitations was not more than a few months, after which we hear very little of them, and no further notice need be taken of them.

This epidemic, if we use the language suggested to the reader by the details given in Wesley's journal—the work of grace, if we adopt his own language—occupied the first half of 1739. The monotonous formulæ made use of by him to describe the symptoms of his penitents effectually conceal from us all that may have been individual or characteristic in them. The need of some simple, untechnical, definite observation of the facts, which cannot be supplied from any contemporary writer, may to some extent be satisfied by the accounts of so-called revivals of later date, these sudden epidemic out-

bursts of religious emotion being all very much alike. The accounts of the late revival in Ireland, for instance, present us with unmistakable evidence of bodily sensations accompanying the emotions of repentance, and not in proportion the strength of those emotions, which is the peculiarity of these manifestations resulting from Wesley's preaching. The following quotation from a letter may prove valuable as illustrating Wesley's accounts with the description of the same facts in a different phraseology, as it may be accepted as unquestionably a specimen of a milder form of the disorder which occupied so much of Wesley's attention at this time. 'We heard of a policeman to-day' (September 3, 1859), 'who, from being an indifferent careless man, had become an example to all his companions, and he has just been with us for an hour and a half. He said he was sorry he had not education or words to explain all that he wished to say: but it appears that, from being perfectly indifferent to religion, he felt a desire to pray; that after that he began to feel a very great weight about his heart, and strange and unhappy feelings; and that when he had gone into a church, thinking he could pray better there, a most extraordinary feeling came over him, as if he could not move any of his limbs. He continued some time in this strange state, and one night when he went to bed felt quite ill, and towards morning heard a voice saying to him, "Get up, and seek the salvation of your soul." The love of Jesus seemed to shine into his heart, and he has been very happy ever since.'

What are we to think of accounts such as these? Imposture, more or less unconscious hysteria, and all



the intermediate shades of self-deception and physical malady cannot explain the facts that such things happen. No one will say that these causes have nothing to do with the result: it is evident that many of Wesley's patients were affected by causes which had nothing to do with religion. The larger proportion of these cases took place in crowded rooms; and the agitation had continued more than a month (April 17 to May 21, 1739) before any one was struck down in the open air. The fact that the much more vehement and exciting preaching of Whitefield failed to produce this agitation to anything like the same extent, and that Charles Wesley's notification on one occasion that any one who was convulsed should be carried out of the congregation ensured perfect quiet, is enough to prove, what we might be sure of without any proof, that love of producing a sensation was sometimes the agent at work. There is something in the awestruck attention with which Wesley met these manifestations which has a tendency to foster them, even when the persons affected are perfectly honest,—and there are many shades between perfect honesty and conscious acting. We must remember, too, what kind of people they were who were thus affected. The lower-middle class of Hanoverian England were turbulent beyond the sense in which uncultivated people are always turbulent. The same instincts which found gratification in cruel amusements and in intoxication would also derive a certain satisfaction from the horrible ravings which Wesley has copied into his journal; they indicate a kind of spiritual gin to which the Kingswood Methodist might have recourse without encountering those

difficulties with which the Government had surrounded its physical symbol.

These causes all help to explain the spread of the disorder: they do not explain its origin. What remains, then, when the large element of nervous imitation, unconscious acting, and that strange love of producing a sensation so remarkable in uneducated persons, are subtracted? There remains no doubt as one element, a distinct physical disorder, which we may identify, for instance, with the dancing mania of the fourteenth century, the victims to which whirled in mad excitement, and with many other strange convulsive movements that seem to have been contagious. But this is not all: any one who studies the account, with the same attention as he would give to that of any other strange event, will be convinced that there was something in the personal influence of Wesley (for it certainly does not remain in his sermons) which had the power of impressing on a dull and lethargic world such a sense of the horror of evil, its mysterious closeness to the human soul, and the need of a miracle for the separation of the two, as no one, perhaps, could suddenly receive without some violent physical effect.

## CHAPTER IX.

### SEPARATION FROM THE MORAVIANS.

WHILE Wesley formed the centre of this strange influence, he was still a member of a community essentially opposed to everything of the kind. The Fetter Lane Society, it will be remembered, was formed avowedly by the advice of Peter Boehler, and the Moravian organization had been followed out in that little Society, as far as it went. But, so far from having any abiding sympathy with the Moravians, John Wesley's prejudices were offended by their strongest characteristics. The word which absorbed the largest fund of his prejudice was *mysticism*. Like enthusiasm in the ears of the Bishops, it was a description of something vague and dangerous, that was to be attacked all the more vehemently because it was not obviously evil. His definition is an emphatic expression of dislike. 'Under the term *mysticism*,' he writes from Georgia, 'I comprehend those, and only those' (a comprehensive definition), 'who slight any of the means of grace!' Now the Moravians certainly slighted what Wesley called the means of grace: they looked upon the new life which both he and they regarded as the great fact of Christianity as an influence which had no connection with any out-

ward channel, and which was to be received only by a complete cessation from all activity of the individual. This divine influence was, in their eyes, a continual stream, which would fill the soul were it but once emptied of all beside. Hence their efforts were directed towards silencing all spiritual utterance, sometimes even that of prayer, and bringing the soul into a state of perfect quiescence, as unlike as possible to the vehement emotion which Wesley hailed as the symptom of the new birth. Hence, too, they took little account of any ordinances of the Church. They did not necessarily abjure these; Gambold, it will be remembered, protested that he did not consider himself to be leaving the Church of England in joining the Moravian Brotherhood. But what they felt strongly, and sometimes expressed in an exaggerated form, was that these ordinances, so far from being any help to the soul in attaining this divine influx of life, might become a positive hindrance in doing so if they were regarded as necessarily channels of that influx. They discouraged, moreover, any retrospective view of this crisis, desiring to keep the spirit continually in the attitude of aspiration; and they shrank especially from Wesley's idea of perfection as something that could be consciously grasped and held as a possession: the sense of helplessness and need was in their view a permanent element in the Christian consciousness. They felt strongly that the highest point of attainment was imperfect; Wesley felt strongly that the lowest point of aspiration must be perfect; and in addition to their real causes of difference both sides imagined themselves assailing error when they merely insisted on nomenclature.

This tendency to separation between him and them was first recognized at a penitential meeting in June 1739, when, says Wesley, 'we met at Fetter Lane to humble ourselves before God, and own He had justly withdrawn His Spirit from us for our manifold unfaithfulness. We acknowledged our having grieved Him by our divisions, one saying, "I am of Paul," and another, "of Apollos," by our resting in those little beginnings of sanctification which it had pleased Him to work in our souls; and above all by blaspheming His work among us, imputing it either to nature, to the force of imagination and animal spirits, or even to the delusion of the devil. In that hour we found God with us as at the first. Some fell prostrate to the ground, others burst out in thanksgiving, and many openly testified there had been no such day as this since' the Pentecostal meeting on January 1, 1739, already mentioned. This state of union was as short-lived as it was rapturous, but it was not till October of the same year (1739), when a new minister came among them, that the divergence became unquestionably apparent. This minister, Philip Henry Molther, who had been a tutor in the Zinzendorf family, undertook the guidance of the Fetter Lane Society during Wesley's absence, and his preaching there excited so much interest that crowds thronged the Society's rooms, and overflowed into the adjoining courtyard, in the dark cold November evenings, to listen to addresses of several hours long, in very imperfect English. When Wesley returned to London on November 1st, he found that his substitute had disseminated much that he thought hurtful error. Molther had opposed his influence to all the physical

manifestations which Wesley had regarded as the most striking proofs of Divine grace : the one strove to calm, the other to rouse, all those he addressed. Molther mentions these signs of emotion with evident distaste. 'The first time I entered their meeting,' he says, 'I was alarmed, and almost terror-stricken, at hearing their sighing and groaning, their whining and howling, which strange proceeding they called the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.' Two persons who could allude to these manifestations in such a different tone could not possibly work together.

Wesley also found on every side results of this new teaching of which he entirely disapproved. The first person whom he met, whom he had left 'strong in faith and zealous in good works,' told him Molther had convinced her she never had any faith, and advised her, till she received faith, 'to be still, ceasing from outward works.' A second 'spoke of the folly of people that kept running about to church and sacrament.' A third addressing the Society after an hour's silence, which seems to have been rather oppressive to Wesley, but which some members perhaps found refreshing after all the screaming, 'spoke of looking unto Jesus, and exhorted us to lie still under His hand.' Such was the unwearied tenor of injunction and confession. Many among Wesley's former penitents had, as a consequence of the new teaching, ceased from any attendance at church or the sacrament, saying, 'They must now trust in Christ alone ; they were poor sinners' (a Shibboleth of the Moravians), 'and had nothing to do but to lie at His feet.'

The chasm widened rapidly. On December 31st Wesley attempted, in a long conversation with Molther,

to join a definite issue, and spent the last minutes of 1739 in drawing up, with the usual evidence of enjoying a clear logical statement, a scheme of their differences respecting faith. The Moravians sought it in 'waiting for Christ, and not using what we term the means of grace, not going to church, not communicating, not fasting, not reading the Scripture;' he sought it by doing all these things. Much hurt, he went on to say, had been done by the teaching of the Moravians: 'many who were beginning to build holiness and good works on the true foundation of faith in Jesus being now wholly unsettled, and lost in vain reasoning and doubtful disputations; many others being brought to a false unscriptural stillness, so that they are not likely to come to any true foundation; and many being grounded on a faith that is without works, so that they who were right before are wrong now.'

In spite of this body of articles, which could not but have widened the division between the two parties, Molther and Wesley made one more attempt at an understanding in a long conversation on the 21st of April. Molther was barely recovered from an illness, which Wesley regarded as a judgment of God upon him, and the two hours' conversation between them which followed may in the case of a barely convalescent invalid be regarded as a judgment equally severe. Of course it did not mend matters. They had got to that pitch which indeed is very soon reached in religious controversy, when argument had done what little it can do, and those who attempt to carry it further merely repeat the same words with increased irritation. It was plain that

any further attempt at union was a mere aimless sacrifice of what was most distinct in Wesley's ideal for the sake of a union that could only be artificial. 'Finding there was no time to delay,' he writes in his journal for the 22nd of June, 'without utterly destroying the cause of God, I began to execute what I had long designed, to strike at the root of the grand delusion. Accordingly, from those words of Jeremiah, "Stand ye in the way, ask for the old paths," I took occasion to give a plain account both of the work which God had begun among us, and of the manner wherein the enemy had sown his tares among the good seed;' and he proceeds to give much the same account of his differences with the Moravians as he had given in the scheme drawn up on the previous 31st of December, but accompanied by more severe expressions of blame. Probably the controversy was still further embittered by the argumentative discussions which occupied the early part of July; and when, on the 16th of the month, they met at Fetter Lane, the chasm between them could be bridged over no longer. Wesley had taken with him a book of mystic divinity in use among them, one of the treatises attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, on which he had been asked his opinion; and as a means, apparently, of bringing matters to a crisis, read out the following extract: 'The Scriptures are good, prayer is good, relieving our neighbour is good: but to one who is not born of God none of these is good, but all very evil. For him to read the Scriptures, or to pray, or to communicate, or to do any outward work, is deadly poison.' 'My brethren,' asked Wesley, after reading this passage



once or twice, 'is this right, or is it wrong?' One of the members cried out, 'It is the truth!' and, in spite of the protest of another, Wesley seems to have accepted him as the spokesman of the whole meeting. Others endeavoured to explain this wild utterance by dwelling on the excuse Wesley had given for it in the exaggerated importance attached by him to outward actions, and after some incoherent discussion the question was distinctly put, whether Mr. Wesley should be allowed to preach at Fetter Lane. A warm debate arose hereupon, in which each side found vehement partisans. 'Had not Wesley been the instrument of often healing their divisions, when they were all in confusion?' asked a member of one party. 'We never were in confusion,' replied a vehement adherent of the other. 'You ought not to say so,' interposed Wesley, addressing the last speaker, with his usual directness and moderation, 'because I have your letters now in my hands.' His opponent cared much more for the success of his party than for the vindication of his own consistency, and replied, 'That is not the first time I have put darkness for light, and light for darkness.' The meeting then broke up in confusion, and when they met again within a few days Wesley had resolved on his line of action. He had brought with him his statement of their differences, to which they seem to have given the sanction of joining issue upon it, and which concluded with these words, 'I believe these assertions to be flatly contrary to the word of God. I have warned you hereof again and again, and besought you to turn back to the law and the testimony. I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn.

But as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same mind, follow me.' Having concluded this address, he left the room, and about eighteen of the Society followed him.

The Moravian account of the separation fits in very well with Wesley's. 'John Wesley,' one of the English Moravians (James Hutton) wrote about this time to Count Zinzendorf, 'being resolved to do all things himself, and having told many souls they were justified who have since discovered themselves to be otherwise, and having mixed the works of the Law with the Gospel as means of grace, is at enmity with the brethren.' Molther's account is more directly that of an opponent. 'In 1740,' he says, 'John Wesley attacked the Society with a view of confounding it. But as most of the members loved the doctrine of our Saviour, and the atonement in His blood, his efforts remained fruitless; and, perceiving his object to be foiled, he separated from the Society, exclaiming, "Whoever belongs to the Lord, let him follow me."' Molther no doubt was here most sincerely endeavouring to give the sense of Wesley's concluding words—'You that are of the same judgment, follow me.' The variation ought to be a warning to us as to what such reports are worth.

Both the strength and weakness of Wesley's character, which are forcibly brought out through the whole dispute, are specially manifest in a correspondence which took place between him and the Moravians at Herrnhut after this separation. Imme-

diately after his quitting the Fetter Lane Society, on the 20th of July, he received a letter from one of them, ordering him no longer to take upon him the position of a teacher, but to give up this to the Moravians, who alone were fit for it. 'St. Peter justly describes you,' his monitor concluded, 'who have eyes full of adultery, and cannot cease from sin, and take upon you to guide unstable souls, and lead them in the way of damnation.' His answer (August 8th, 1740) returns nothing of this railing. It has an almost apostolic superscription, being 'from John Wesley, a presbyter of the Church of God in England, to the Church of God at Herrnhut, in Upper Lusatia.' Nothing, however, can be humbler than the beginning. 'It may seem strange,' he writes, 'that such a one as I am should take upon me to write to you. You I believe to be children of God, through faith which is in Jesus; me you believe (as some of you have declared) to be a child of the devil, a servant of corruption. Yet whatsoever I am, or whatsoever you are, I beseech you to weigh the following words, if haply God, who "sendeth by whom He will send," may give you light thereby, although the "mist of darkness," as one of you affirms, should be reserved for me for ever.' And he goes on to arrange, under fifteen heads, the offences of the Moravians; who were guilty, it appears, besides their erroneous views about faith, of discussing public affairs and other secular subjects, of joining in worldly diversions in order to do good, of wearing gold and silver ornaments (or, by the trade of a jeweller and others similar to it, giving occasion to other persons to adorn them-

selves in this manner), of cowardly or politic reserve, of despising the ordinances of the Church, of thinking far too much of their own Church; finally, of the crowning sin of mysticism. The Brethren do not appear, in the answer which they sent to this rebuke, and which Wesley would have done more honourably to have published with the letter itself, to have denied one of these charges. One remark of theirs, quoted by him, forms a key to the whole difference between them. Wesley had heard some of the Moravians affirm that the salvation of faith implied liberty from the commandments of God, and one cannot but feel that the explanation of the Moravians implied a much higher ideal of holiness than Wesley, with his keen eyes for their gold brooches and pins, was setting before himself. 'All things which are a *commandment* to the natural man,' they replied, 'are a *promise* to him that has been justified.' As to their letting wrong acts pass unreprieved in their presence, which was what Wesley called their cowardly reserve, they pleaded that they neither on the one hand intended to assume the office of the civil magistrate, nor on the other professed themselves capable of reading the heart. 'Alas, alas!' is Wesley's comment, 'what casuistry is this!'

This correspondence was not the only intercourse which took place between him and them about this time, but it forms a sufficient introduction to the last interview between Wesley and Zinzendorf, which is the only remaining stage in the controversy that need be noticed. The conversation took place on September 30, 1741, in Gray's Inn Walks, then a public garden—a significant meeting-place, which

obliged neither speaker to be the guest of the other. We have no account of the meeting but from Wesley, and he only gives 'the more material portion.' Any one who has ever entered into the two sides of a dispute, and considers what a very different kind of thing it would seem according as either party published what he thought the more material portion, will understand all the allowance with which this account is to be received.

It begins by the abrupt question from Zinzendorf, 'Why have you changed your religion?' Of course Wesley professed his ignorance of such a result—'Who,' he asked, 'had given that account of him?' 'You yourself,' was the reply. 'In your letter to us you say that true Christians are not poor sinners: this is utterly false. The best of men are miserable sinners till death; if any one says otherwise, they are either mere impostors, or seduced by the devil. You have attacked our Brethren for teaching better things, and when they sought peace from you you refused it.' 'I do not understand what you mean,' said Wesley, who had not used those words in his letter, and was incapable of answering what an opponent meant rather than what he said. Upon this Zinzendorf began a review of their intercourse. 'I loved you much when you wrote to me from Georgia, and recognized your simplicity of heart. On your second letter I still recognized your simplicity of heart, but saw that it was accompanied by confused ideas. When you came to see us, your ideas were more than ever confused.' He then went on to some personal matters, which Wesley had a right to put aside as irrelevant; and when Wesley substituted for these

the true issue between them—that he feared the Moravians erred both as to not aiming at Christian perfection, and not prizing the means of grace—he burst out into a vehement protest against the idea of inherent perfection. ‘I allow of no inherent perfection in this life. All our perfection is imputed, not inherent. This is the error of errors, which I follow with fire and sword through the whole world. Whoever follows inherent perfection denies Christ.’ ‘Surely we are disputing about words,’ said Wesley, and went on to ask if every true believer was not holy, if he did not live a holy life, and if his heart was not sanctified if he did not love God with all his heart and serve Him with all his strength; and, on his opponent answering in the affirmative, urged that this was all he contended for. But this, Zinzendorf answered, was all legal sanctity, not evangelic. The Christian, he boldly asserted, did not grow in holiness as he grew in love. Wesley made an honest attempt to understand Zinzendorf’s meaning. ‘Surely,’ he said, ‘the love of God increased in the heart of the true believer.’ Even this Zinzendorf vehemently denied. As lead changed into gold was not more gold the second day than the first, thus, he said, it was with the heart of the believer. ‘I thought we were to grow in grace,’ urged Wesley. ‘In grace, but not in holiness,’ was the reply. ‘Perhaps I do not understand you,’ said Wesley. ‘In denying ourselves, do we not die more and more to the world, and live to God?’ This roused Zinzendorf to his utmost vehemence. ‘We reject all self-denial,’ he exclaimed; ‘we trample it under foot. We do as believers whatever we like, and nothing besides; we laugh at all mortification.’ Wesley here

put an end to the useless conversation by promising that he would consider, with the help of God, what Zinzendorf had said to him.

These last words of Zinzendorf are repeated in a pamphlet written by him in 1755 in English, with the spirit of which Wesley no doubt would have agreed. 'It was no self-denial to my Saviour, nor any mortification, to lead a holy life in this world. When He, dying for us, abolished our guilt and pain, He obtained for all partakers of His merits the privilege to sin no more, and to live in this world as He would have lived Himself, had He lived in our station and in our times. So I also scorn heartily the doing good by way of self-denial and mortification.'

Comparing these words with Wesley's letter, it is not difficult to see what Zinzendorf meant by Wesley having changed his religion. Wesley, when he first wrote from Georgia to Zinzendorf, and when he afterwards visited him at Marienborn, was a seeker. He was looking for a spirit beyond himself; he was desiring to be submitted to an influence that he had not yet felt. When he wrote to rebuke the Moravians for what he thought their self-indulgence, all this had passed away: he had taken up the attitude most exactly opposite to that of a seeker—a censor of others for not feeling exactly the same as himself. To Zinzendorf, the change in his point of view looked like a change in his convictions.

One remark must be made in excuse of what appears so censorious in Wesley's attitude to the Moravians. They sought to live by an inward rule, and he by an outward one; and the reader will probably feel more sympathy with them than with him:

but his rebuke, however arrogant, had in it nothing of that rejoicing in evil which is the root of a censorious spirit. He would have been unfitted for the work he had to do if he had copied the Moravians. To fight against gross outward forms of wickedness, and raise up a religious order among the classes addicted to them, an outward ideal of goodness is necessary; and if it does not seem to us that a censorious attitude of mind to those who neither need nor adopt this code is also necessary, we must ask ourselves whether any one has ever accomplished a great work without under-estimating those who took no share in it.

After this time Wesley's feeling to the Moravians went through many vicissitudes. He was at first and at last just to them, as far as it is possible to be just to people whom one does not understand. It is not often that a religious leader can be as generous to a colleague who blurs the distinction he is anxious to retain as to an avowed opponent. Wesley defended the men who were dragging him into an association with Dissent, at the time when such association was most injurious to all he cared about. This accusation, which was constantly brought against him about the time of his separation from the Moravians, was a serious hindrance to his powers of usefulness. It was about this time that he was excluded from the gaol at Bristol, in spite of the earnest desire of the prisoners under sentence of death,—doubtless upon this pretext. Now, though the 'United Brethren' were not necessarily Dissenters, in the most reasonable sense of that word—for they held all the doctrines of the Church of England,



and adhered to its form of government—still, when they took to declaiming against the ordinances of that Church, and speak of the folly of attending its services, they could not be regarded as its members. And the endeavour of those who attacked him was to identify him and them, so as to make him answerable for all the real and fancied extravagances of a body which at this time would have been unpopular merely from its foreign name. This endeavour was not met by Wesley, at the time when such a course would have been most to his interest by any denunciation of the Moravians. For some years he was certainly most unjust to them,—we may use this epithet, whether the injurious narratives and still more injurious hints which he included in his published journals are true or false,—for there is no trace of his ever having investigated these reports; and he was indeed not the person to do so. He never seems to have sifted stories told him, though he sometimes disbelieved them. But this is the injustice of one who readily believes whatever strongly impresses his imagination, whether it be good or bad, and not of one who is glad to think ill of an enemy.

Towards the close of his life, though there was nothing of that tenderness with which more personal natures would have reverted to an early and interrupted sympathy, Wesley's tone was gentle and reverent. His latest notice of Zinzendorf occurs in a sermon preached at Plymouth Dock, on knowing Christ after the flesh. It is a direct attack on that kind of religion which was most prevalent among the Moravians, and pre-eminently in Zinzendorf, and

which some of the earlier Moravian hymns illustrate in a manner which shocks other feelings than those of reverence. Yet Zinzendorf is mentioned as 'a late great man, whose memory I love and esteem;' and the Moravian hymns, disfigured as they are, receive his warmest commendation.

## CHAPTER X.

### SEPARATION FROM WHITEFIELD.

IT has been seen that the subject of predestination had occasioned Wesley some perplexity even during his college days, and that he was led, apparently by the arguments of his mother, to interpret the Article which treats of that subject in what is called (by many who never heard of the Dutchman who Latinized his name into Arminius) an Arminian sense; a sense, that is, which supposes the predestination of some to salvation and others to damnation to be not the cause, but the effect, of something God foresees in them. Whitefield, on the other hand, was always a Calvinist; and during his second visit to America (1739-41) he became convinced that the great truth that Christ did *not* die for all mankind was 'children's bread,' and could not afterwards in conscience refrain from publishing it. A division between the two Methodist leaders hence became inevitable; and the same year which separated Wesley from his spiritual guides separated him also from his spiritual pupil. A few preliminary words must be given to the question which separated them. What is ordinarily, and somewhat unfortunately, called Calvinism may be stated in a form plainly repugnant to many declarations of

Scripture and to the instincts of humanity, while it has yet been held by many not only with intense belief, but with the deepest satisfaction of their whole nature. It must therefore be capable of being seen from very different points of view, and an attempt to exhibit these will not be out of place as an introduction to this controversy.

It appears to many persons a sufficient answer to the question why some men are good and some bad to assert that man has the power of resisting the divine influence, and that the division of good and bad is the division of those who have and have not responded to the prompting of His Spirit. But, passing over the difficulty that it is impossible to look round at the world we live in and assert that all are placed in circumstances equally favourable to make this response, it is surely evident to a logical mind that what is thus made the cause of goodness *is* goodness. To yield ourselves up to the influence of God means to love all things holy and pure, so that we come round to the question we began with, 'Why have some human beings this love and not others?' It is not easy to see how this question can be answered to the satisfaction of a logician otherwise than in the sense, if not the words, of Calvin, to choose the theologian usually associated with the doctrine of predestination. 'God in His secret counsel freely chooses whom He will, and rejects others,' he says in his 'Institutes': 'as He has made oxen and asses and human beings, so He has made a distinction among human beings, giving some the spirit which receives His law, to others denying it.' And as the brute animals have no right to expostulate with God for not being made men, so the

rejected among men have no right to expostulate for not being of the accepted. It is not that God chooses among His creatures, as a king among his subjects, those who are by nature fitted to be His servants. His choice of His servants is the cause, and not the effect, of whatever is good in them. They are holy because He has chosen them; He has not chosen them because they are holy. 'If He chose us that we should be holy, His foresight of our future holiness was not the cause of His choice.'

The objections to this doctrine, too obvious and profound to need statement at even the length here accorded to the doctrine itself, did not strike the contemporaries of Calvin as they struck the contemporaries of Whitefield; did not strike the contemporaries of Whitefield as they strike us. The great modern idea of democracy has advanced since the Reformation with such gigantic strides that its influence on every neighbouring region of thought increases, in the last three centuries, in a geometrical ratio. The very illustration we have paraphrased from Calvin, that there is no more difficulty in the spectacle of the elect and the reprobate side by side than in that of a man and a butterfly, for instance, side by side, exhibits to us the kind of change that has passed over thought since such an argument was put forward by a great logician. And while the difficulties of Calvinism are thus of a kind to be felt much more feebly by our ancestors than by us, its attractions are either such as remain untouched by time, or as have decreased with time. The idea of a baffled God does not shock us as it would shock them (just as the idea of a cruel God did not shock them as it shocks us);

but this change is in a considerable degree to our loss. Feebleness and failure are so associated with our practical experience of a ruler, that an allowance for this creeps unawares into the feeling with which we approach the Eternal throne.

Democracy has been spoken of as the confutation of Calvinism, and assuredly this is no unmixed gain if the conquest has been made at the expense of the truth which Calvinism teaches, and a vindictive has been exchanged for a feeble God. If we let the shadow of earthly limitations extend to the heavens, it is better, perhaps, that they should touch God's power than His love; but it is well that there should be those who assert firmly and clearly that they do *not* touch His power. And Calvinism, so far as it is a protest that the death of Christ and the whole Divine constitution under which we stand was no failure, but achieved the Divine purpose, was not then and perhaps never will be a superfluous utterance.

Of those attractions in this doctrine, on the other hand, which are unaffected by the progress of history, one is the noblest and one the least noble of all the instincts of humanity. It fills the soul with a sense of entire dependence upon God, and it gives it a spiritual platform whence it may look down upon all beside itself and a favoured few.

It may appear strange, even to one who assents to what has been said of the influence of democracy, to speak of this belief as welcome to any *instinct* of our nature. The human being who came nearest to the God of the Calvinists would be a father who chose out certain of his children to be sent away from his sight at their birth into some den of wickedness, to be

brought up there, and who afterwards took an active share in bringing them to the gallows. And yet men who would have died any number of deaths themselves to save one soul from hell, have regarded the decree by which the greater portion of the human race was devoted to hell before the world began not merely with reverent awe, but with delight. What every one who has expressed delight in this doctrine must have felt is, that it makes man a mere vessel for the goodness of God. Every movement of his soul is, from this point of view, a direct and simple result of God's will; and the gratitude which turns to Him, no less than the gift which excites it, is His own.

It would not be true to say that the ignoble attractions of Calvinism were entirely without influence on the mind of Whitefield; he was put into a very undignified flutter of delight by the attentions of the nobility, and was fully alive to all the advantage of belonging to a favoured race in the spiritual world. But this doctrine had on the whole its root in the nobler part of his nature; and in his mind the personal feeling, which must form a large element wherever it is welcomed, was intensified by the memory of that life of evil from which he had been delivered. He had the most vital conviction that there was in him no stirrings of good which had attracted God's mercy, but that this mercy had been the cause of all right impulses he had ever felt. 'O free grace!' he constantly exclaims in the fragmentary, disjointed sentences which express so well his disconnected style of thought; 'sovereign, electing, distinguishing love! Why me, Lord, why me?' To admit that all men might have had the gift he possessed would be

to admit that he had done something to earn it which they had not. It might indeed seem that to one of his kindly nature the condition of the rejected was an idea much too horrible to be brought in merely as a foil to his own happiness, but the fact was that this kindness of heart prevented his ever realizing it in any other point of view. He was always ready to pass lightly over wrongs and insults to himself, and he could imagine God doing otherwise only when his fervent gratitude led him to resist an explanation of the gift of redemption which seemed to him to lower its value. His second visit to America affords us another illustration of the singular manner in which he could at once realize and forget the sufferings of those who were not identified with any religious object. He found the colony in a state of great depression, deserted by the most industrious half of its inhabitants, and possessing only a needy and dissolute population. The unfortunate regulations of the charter with regard to the tenure of land seem to have been the source of the evils suffered by the Georgians, but equal discontent was directed against that provision of the charter which forbade slavery. Whitefield took up this question with energy, and devoted all his influence to obtaining for the colonists the use of 'rum and slaves.' His evidence before a Parliamentary Committee, on his return in 1741, no doubt helped on the result in 1752, when a new constitution was established by which slavery was made lawful. Here then we see Whitefield successfully endeavouring to condemn no small number of his fellow-creatures to a fate which, from some accounts actually before him, only needed an infinite prolongation to

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over it, and said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not!" Now if ye say they would, but He would not,—which is exactly what no Calvinist would say,—‘you represent Him (which who could bear?) as weeping crocodile’s tears; weeping over the city which Himself had doomed to destruction! Such blasphemy this, as one would think might make the ear of a Christian to tingle! But there is yet more behind; for just as it honours the Son, so does this doctrine honour the Father. It represents the most holy God as worse than the devil, as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust. More false, because the devil, liar as he is, has never said, “He willeth all men to be saved.” More unjust, because the devil, if he would, cannot be guilty of such injustice as you ascribe to God, when you say that God condemned millions of souls to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, for continuing in sin which, for want of that grace which He will not give them, they cannot avoid. And more cruel, because that unhappy spirit seeketh rest and findeth none, so that his own restless misery is a kind of temptation to him to tempt others. But God resteth in His high and holy place, so that to suppose Him of His own mere motion, of His pure will and pleasure, happy as He is, to doom His creatures whether they will or no’ (which was again an entire misrepresentation of the view he was attacking), ‘to endless misery, is to impute such cruelty to Him as we cannot impute even to the great enemy of God and man. It is to represent the most high God (he

that hath ears to hear let him hear) as more cruel, false, and unjust than the devil. Here I fix my foot—You represent God as worse than the devil. But you say you will prove it by Scripture. Hold! What! will you prove by Scripture that God is worse than the devil? It cannot be. Whatever that Scripture proves, it can never prove this; whatever its true meaning be, this cannot be its true meaning. Do you ask, "What is its true meaning then?" If I say I know not, you have gained nothing; for there are many scriptures the true sense whereof neither you nor I shall know till death is swallowed up in victory. But this I know, better it were to say it had no sense at all than to say it had such a sense as this. It cannot mean, whatever it mean besides, that the God of truth is a liar. Let it mean what it will, it cannot mean that the Judge of all the earth is unjust.'

This sermon was published, and a copy, sent out to America, fell into the hands of Whitefield. It was not the first indication of Wesley's polemic attitude which had reached him. Several letters which passed between them on the subject of Predestination suggest a curious specimen of controversy between a fitful inconsistent intellect, which took everything by fragments, and a mind eminent for its coherence. Whitefield's first allusion to the subject is merely defensive. In a letter from Savannah, of March 26th, after thanking Wesley for a copy of his journal, and declaring his willingness to follow him, though with unequal steps, he proceeds: 'My honoured friend and brother, for once hearken to a child who is ready to wash your feet. I beseech you by the mercies of

the useless temptations afforded by dispute about it. The breach with the Moravians took place immediately after this dialogue, and probably diverted Wesley's attention from the subject, but during the ensuing winter he was forced to return to it. John Cennick, an eager weak youth, who had gained much influence among the colliers, became a strong Calvinist about the close of 1740; and when Wesley remonstrated with him in the presence of several others of the Society, for stirring up the dispute, he took a tone of equality, and told him he and those who felt with him were willing to join with Wesley's Society, but must also meet separately to confirm one another in those truths which he opposed. 'You should have told me this before,' replied Wesley, 'and not have supplanted me in my own house, stealing the hearts of the people, and by private accusations separating very friends.' 'I have never privately accused you,' said Cennick very imprudently, for Wesley immediately produced the copy of a wild and foolish letter written to Whitefield, begging him to return from America to support the cause of election. 'I sit solitary, like Eli,' the letter declared, 'waiting what will become of the Ark. How glorious did the Gospel once seem to flourish in Kingswood! I spake of the everlasting love of Christ with sweet power. But now brother Charles is suffered to open his mouth against this truth, while the frightened sheep gaze and fly as if no shepherd was among them. It is just as if Satan was making war with the saints in a more than common way. Oh pray for the distressed lambs yet left in this place, that they faint not. Surely they would if preaching would do it. . . . With Universal Redemption, brother Charles pleases the

world. Brother John follows him in everything. I believe no atheist can more preach against predestination than they.'

The humorous image of an atheist preaching against predestination was quite wasted, one fears, upon the little Methodist gathering! Cennick was quite unabashed by the recital of his absurd letter; he stood up and declared that he neither retracted anything in it nor blamed himself for sending it. The warmth with which these words were spoken seemed about to spread to others, and Wesley at once adjourned the meeting, and desired that it should come together again on the following Saturday, this being Sunday, so that he had a week for reflection. But he did not probably need it. He must have seen at once that Cennick must leave the Society or apologize for his behaviour. The organic unity of the Society depended on its having a head, and there was no one who could take that place but himself. He spent the interval between the meetings in taking a searching review of the Society. Those against whom any accusation was brought were confronted with their accusers in the presence of Wesley; and accordingly as he was satisfied that they were either innocent or penitent, or considered them as persistent wrong-doers, they received tickets and were enrolled as members, or were definitely excluded from the United Society. How much it must have gained in coherence and strength from this purification (by which it lost in numbers about forty) it is needless to point out. The issue of tickets to those who remained to the Society occupied the following days; and when Wesley met Cennick and his party with the rest of the Kingswood

bands on Saturday, the 28th of February, 1741, he was ready for them. Having listened to what they had to say, he rose, and instead of attempting to answer read out a paper, by which it was declared that 'several members of the Kingswood bands having made it their practice to scoff at the preaching of John and Charles Wesley, and having censured them behind their backs at the very time they professed love and esteem to their faces'—therefore not for their opinions, whether they be right or wrong, but for the causes above mentioned, 'I, John Wesley, by the consent and approbation of the Kingswood bands, do declare the persons above mentioned to be no longer members thereof.' The schismatic party affected to take the matter very lightly. They would join the Society if Wesley liked, they said, thus ingeniously inverting the effect of their expulsion; they were not going to own they had done anything amiss. They had heard both the Wesleys preach Popery often. 'Take time to consider of it,' replied Wesley; 'give me your answer to-morrow evening.' But March 1st brought no change, and Wesley prolonged the time of consideration.

On March 7th he met the seceders for the last time. Open dealing, he began by observing, was best; he should therefore tell plainly what he regarded as wrong in them, setting all opinions aside. Their offences were arranged under three heads, one which included 'their not speaking or praying when met together till they were sensibly moved thereto'—an indication of Moravian tendencies among them. Their despising the ministers of God, and dividing themselves from their brethren, were the other counts in the

indictment; but the offenders saw the advantage they would gain in appearing to separate upon a doctrinal point, and one of them exclaimed, 'It is our holding election which is the true cause of your separating from us.' 'You know in your own conscience it is not,' replied Wesley. 'There are several Predestinarians in our Societies both in London and Bristol, nor did I ever yet put one out of either because he held that opinion.' 'Well,' said the objector, who apparently felt the justice of this remark, 'we will break up our Society, on condition you will receive and employ Mr. Cennick as you did before.' 'My brother has wronged me much,' replied Wesley with temperate firmness, 'but he doth not say "I repent."' 'Unless in not speaking in your defence, I do not know that I wronged you at all,' said Cennick. 'Nothing then remains, it seems,' said he, 'but for each to choose which Society he pleases.' A short prayer followed, and then Cennick left the room, and about half those present followed him, and were afterwards merged in Whitefield's Society, till Cennick, in 1745, separated from him and went over to the Moravians, in which Society he died some years later.

Cennick was a mere adherent of Whitefield's, and his separation from Wesley was only the first stage of the final separation of the two Methodist leaders: both took place immediately afterwards. It was during this month that Whitefield published a pamphlet fitted to encumber the controversy with matter more irrelevant, more personal, and more unwise than has often been dragged in to embitter and confuse dispute in the long history of controversy. The attempt to answer Wesley's arguments occupied but a small

proportion of the pamphlet ; nearly half his space is devoted to the useless discussion as to the expediency of using them, a discussion which he made much worse than useless by the turn he gave it. After recounting and blaming the means which Wesley had taken to decide upon preaching his sermon—drawing lots,—he allowed his eagerness to convince his opponent of folly to carry him so far as to publish to the world the story of his attempted detention at Deal when about to sail for America the first time. It was in March 1741, after many months of reflection, that he made the irreparable blunder after which his friendship with Wesley could never be taken up exactly on the same footing.

What little there is in the pamphlet of a directly controversial nature does not, however, strike the present writer as altogether contemptible in the way of argument. Much of Wesley's reasoning was indeed so weak that the answer suggested itself on merely reading the objection. Whitefield had no difficulty in disposing of the assertion that if 'predestination be true, then is all preaching vain,' 'that if a sick man knows that he must unavoidably die, or unavoidably recover, it is unreasonable for him to take any physic at all,' which, extraordinary as it seems, is brought forward by Wesley as an argument against predestination. But what is most valuable and interesting in the letter is the distinctness with which he points out the logical tendency of Wesley's doctrine. 'If those texts, "God willeth not the death of a sinner," "I have no pleasure in him that dieth," are to be taken in their strict sense,' he says, with the sense of bringing Wesley's doctrine to a *re-*

*ductio ad absurdum*, 'then no one will be damned. You cannot make good the assertion that Christ died for them that perish, without holding, as Peter Boehler lately frankly confessed in a letter, that all the damned souls will hereafter be brought out of hell.' And he ends with an unanswerable question, 'How can all be universally redeemed if all are not universally saved?'

The passage is worth pondering. No one could have been more horrified at any suggestion of the inexactness of Scripture than Whitefield, in a general way. But when it came to the dogma of everlasting punishment, he confesses that the literal sense of the New Testament must not be pressed, or we could no longer hold that any human being would be hopelessly lost.

The visit to England during which this pamphlet was published was Whitefield's evil hour. He had been during his visit in America under a hurtful influence: a friend of the name of Seward who had gone out with him seems to have been the person to encourage all that was weak in him; he had written an arrogant tirade against Tillotson and the author of 'The Whole Duty of Man'—the idols of orthodox England in that day; and finally he had taken up a very censorious and trivial tone towards Wesley on other matters than predestination, and had written to complain of the sumptuous furniture in the Kingswood meeting-room—which grandeur turned out on investigation to consist of a pair of tin candlesticks and a green baize cloth. The bond was still close which united him to Charles Wesley, who had been the first to become intimate with him, and was always the last



to let go a friend. 'It would have melted any heart,' writes Whitefield, with his usual sentimental profusion, 'to have heard us weeping, after prayer that, if possible, the breach might be prevented.' But there was nothing of this spirit in the meeting between him and the elder brother, which took place on March 28th, 1741. Though Whitefield had only been in England about a fortnight before they met, Wesley had, he says, already heard much of Whitefield's 'unkind behaviour,' and they now came together merely to understand each other's attitude. Whitefield told his old friend that they preached two different gospels, and avowed his intention to preach against him, wherever he preached at all. A friend who made a third at this interview reminded Whitefield of a promise made only a few days before, that he would never preach against the Wesleys, let his private opinion be what it might. But the fitful nature of the man made promises of small avail—this, he declared, had been only an effect of human weakness, and he was now of another mind. Wesley greatly approved his plainness of speech, and Whitefield heard his objections, urged in a coherent and logical manner, very different from his own impetuous and capricious attack. It was, Wesley argued in his usual orderly manner, firstly, very imprudent to publish an answer to his sermon at all, as it was putting weapons in the hands of those who were glad to damage their common cause; secondly, if he must publish, he need not have mentioned Wesley's name; thirdly, the answer was insufficient, 'leaving four of my eight arguments untouched;' fourthly, that so much was irrelevant and injurious in it as to make an open and probably irreparable breach between them,

'seeing for a treacherous wound and the betraying of secrets every one will depart.'

Thus the close of 1741 saw the Evangelical body split up into three divisions. Those who were in sympathy with what is called mystical religion, who disliked the violent manifestations of early Methodism, and were without its strong missionary tendency, had joined the 'United Brethren,' or Moravians. Those who adhered to the doctrine of predestination, or, as it is called in theological language, of election, and who considered this a vital point (for at this stage of the controversy there was nothing, as has been seen, in the mere belief to exclude them from Wesley's Society), had joined themselves to a body which to a certain degree found a centre in Whitefield, though he never occupied anything like the same position which John Wesley held to the third division—the Wesleyan Methodists—now formed into a coherent union ruled by one master spirit, all the more firmly fixed in this position of pre-eminence because it was unsought by himself.

## CHAPTER XI.

### CONSOLIDATION OF METHODISM.

THE two foregoing chapters have traced the separation of Wesleyan Methodism from the Calvinistic and Moravian elements with which in its earliest stage it was combined. The description of its internal organization, with which we are now occupied, presents a task of greater difficulty. Those who know hardly anything else of Wesley are acquainted with the eulogium of Lord Macaulay, 'that he had a genius for ecclesiastical government not inferior to that of Richelieu.' Coming to the study of that government with this parallel in mind, the reader will probably be disappointed; he will expect to hear of great and original ideas brought to bear on a varied field of action, and will find only a man whose ideal was at once lofty and external, forming a natural centre for a religious movement, which was not allied with thought, and which he did not originate. This passiveness in the founder of Methodism is one of the most marked features of the movement; we are reminded of it at almost all the crises of the history, and nowhere more than in the manner in which its internal organization was evolved. In 1744 we find it a complete and well-organized body, admirably

fitted for the work it had to do, but the steps by which this result had been attained were little more than accidents of which Wesley had taken advantage, or suggestions which he had accepted.

When, in 1740, he separated from the Moravians, the fragment of the earlier Society which adhered to him did not form the entire body of his followers. In the autumn of the previous year eight or ten persons had come to him, and desired to form themselves into a little Society under his guidance, for directions how 'to flee from the wrath to come.' A dilapidated foundry in Moorfields had been lately turned into a meeting-house, and afforded a convenient locality for the gatherings resulting from this proposal, which increased so rapidly that the eight or ten persons were soon increased to a hundred, while their insistence on subscription to meet the expenses thus originated introduced a fiscal system into the Society. It was out of a further extension of this fiscal system that some of the most characteristic peculiarities of Methodism arose. A new meeting-house had been built at Bristol, and Wesley had been forced, by the refusal of his followers under any alternative to have anything to do with it, to discharge those he had appointed to bear the responsibility of the work, and take it upon himself. A discussion arose afterwards with some of the Society at Bristol, the date of which Wesley does not mention, concerning the means of paying off the debts which had been thus incurred ; and one of the party made the obvious suggestion that every one should give a penny a week till all were paid off. 'But many are too poor,' said Wesley—thus giving us an indication of the social position of

his followers. 'Put eleven of the poorest with me,' was the reply, 'and I will call on them weekly, and make up their subscription if they are unable to give; and do each of you the same.' The little council thus became collectors of a shilling a week, and in the process of collection of course acquired much knowledge of the morals of the subscribers. Such a one, they told Wesley, did not live up to the ideal of the Society. Here, it flashed upon him, was the very organization of which he had often felt the want, and of which he now resolved to take advantage. Thus the number in a class was fixed at twelve, the report which had been volunteered was now requested, and the rebukes which in some cases followed were, if rejected, the preliminary to formal exclusion, for which a simple method was supplied by not renewing the quarterly tickets given out by Wesley himself. The issue of these quarterly tickets was in like manner a gradually discovered need. Wesley found, no doubt, that the reports of the leaders were not always to be relied on, and resolved on a personal interview with every member of the classes once every three months. If this was unsatisfactory, a mere omission secured the purity of the order, and cut off the offender without giving him anything to complain of. No one could feel injured at belonging to a society which conveyed no worldly advantages whatever, only so long as he kept the rules imposed on it by its acknowledged head, these rules being no more than what Wesley thought the duties of every Christian. The weekly meeting of the class was a result consequent on the inconveniences of the first arrangement—the leader visiting each member at his own house. The duties

of a leader were to 'advise, reprove, comfort, and exhort, as occasion may require,' and to receive their contributions for the poor, which they had to make over to the stewards of the Society. Thus originated a system of practical beneficence which might not at the present day appear at all remarkable, but which had then no precedent, and to which, indeed, we may probably ascribe something of the renewed zeal of the Church in this direction. Nothing could be better for the purpose than the system of poor relief instituted by Methodism. The stewards were to produce their accounts once a month, that they might be transcribed into the ledger; twice a week they were to meet in council, but nothing was to be done without the consent of the minister 'actually had or reasonably presumed,' so that the office of steward, though very onerous, was not one of great liberty; neither was it by any means lucrative: the stewards seem to have received nothing for the labours which must have occupied so much more than the two mornings a week which were devoted to them. The circumstances of the Society would preserve this little poor-law board from the faults to which such a body is naturally liable: lavishness or carelessness was hardly possible with funds needing the most exact economy in order to cover the necessity presented so vividly to those who held them; while the fact that the stewards were not collectors would save them from any temptation to an opposite error.

The internal arrangement of the Society was, with some modifications, a repetition of the Moravian organization already described; the various divisions were not always precisely identical, but there was no

substantial difference, and often the name is retained,—as for instance in the Bands, smaller and more intimate classes rendered homogeneous by the separation of married and single women, and married and single men, meeting together for mutual confession; there were also divisions according to the stage reached by the members in the spiritual life. The Methodists' place of education is due to Whitefield, who suggested the erection of Kingswood School, and obtained a grant of land for it. Wesley himself supplied Methodism with its liturgy, as we may call the Wesleyan Hymn-books; for they, far more than the Prayer-book, were associated with the devotion of the early Methodists.

In the step which at this time tended most decidedly towards severance from the Church of England—the appointment of lay preachers—Wesley was not only a passive but a reluctant party. In any other point of view this step was not important. John Cennick, a layman, had expounded the Scriptures to the colliers, and was encouraged by Wesley for doing so; and the interval between expounding and preaching does not seem a large one. Slight as this transition was, however, it passed over a boundary line, and one which Wesley was reluctant to cross. The intelligence received by him at Bristol in 1742 that Thomas Maxfield, one of his 'lay helpers,' had been preaching at the Foundry, greatly disquieted him. He hurried to London in so much perturbation that, on his arrival, his mother perceived it in his countenance. 'What is the matter?' she asked. 'Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher, I find,' was the abrupt reply. His mother answered him with earnestness, 'John, you know what

my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of readily favouring anything of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called to preach as you are.' Her mind, perhaps, went back as she spoke to her own gatherings in the kitchen at Epworth more than thirty years ago, to the opposition which she had to encounter from the curate and from her husband, and the earnestness with which she had formerly pleaded re-awakened within her. Her son yielded to her concluding words, 'Examine what are the fruits of his preaching, and hear him yourself,' and his compliance ended in his entire sanction of the measures.

Mrs. Wesley did not long survive this valuable and helpful exertion of her influence. In July of this year, 1742, Wesley was recalled to London from Bristol by an account of the illness which he found on arriving to be near its conclusion. Her last coherent words to the sons and daughters gathered round her bed—'Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God'—express a frame of mind with which he must have felt the fullest sympathy; and the relation which in its earthly phase was thus closed was probably the tenderest of which he ever was a member. The affections and interests which find their fitting objects in wife and children were fully absorbed by the Society founded by him, and the love diffused over so large a surface had hardly any points of concentration. He was disappointed in a much stronger attachment than the early fancy in Georgia, and his successful attempt at marriage was unfortunate. In 1751 he married a widow with children,—a union which seems to have been



chiefly remarkable for exhibiting his extreme forbearance. After taxing his patience by every kind of insult, which he bore with great magnanimity, she left him in 1770, but he remained on affectionate terms with her children and grandchildren, and mentioned the latter in his will.

The order which took the place of a family to John Wesley, and of which he could not help being an absolute monarch, was to become an oligarchy whenever he should be taken from it. On June 25th, 1744, a few clergymen well inclined to Methodism, and a few lay assistants, came together to meet Wesley in London, and give him 'their advice respecting the best method of carrying on the work of God.' Thus originated the Methodist Conference, a regular body of lay preachers, meeting annually to consult concerning the discipline and organization of the Society, for which after Wesley's death it was responsible. During his lifetime its consultations afford little more than an opportunity for his opinions to be promulgated. Supremacy such as this, considering what Wesley was and what the early Wesleyans were, was quite inevitable. On the one hand was a man of iron will, profound conviction, a single aim, and all the advantages of a learned education. On the other was a set of half-educated or uneducated people; not remarkable in any way. The only position in which they could stand to him was that of subordination. But no promise of submission was demanded from any applicant for admission to the Methodist Society, nor did Wesley in his best days suppose that every Christian must belong to the body which owned him as its guide.

If we seek to put into a few words his own view of that body, we may say that it was a Society aiming at filling up what was wanting in the English Church in order to realize all that a Christian Church should be. If people are to be bound together, as he thought they were, there must be some way of getting rid of those with whom the union is impossible. This, he discovered, was not the case with the Church of England. On the other hand, there was within the Church no channel for the kind of influence which he thought one Christian ought to exercise on another. He truly replied to those that reproached him with estranging people from the Church, that he offered them a kind of union which they had not the slightest chance of finding within the Church. 'The fellowship you speak of,' he urged to these objectors, 'never existed, and cannot be destroyed. Who watched over these in love? Who marked their growth in grace? Who advised and exhorted them from time to time? This alone is Christian fellowship, but alas! where is it to be found? Look east, west, north, or south, name what parish you please, is Christian fellowship there? Rather, are not the bulk of the parishioners a mere rope of sand? What Christian connection is there between them? What intercourse in spiritual things? What watching over each other's souls? What a mere jest is it, then, to talk of destroying what never was.' Most true, in the sense which Wesley meant by Christian fellowship, *i.e.* the fellowship of an order. At its best, the Church was not that; he saw it at its worst, and therefore, whatever confutation a liberal and energetic system of Anglican organization might

have given to his belief that a supplementary order was necessary, was lost to him.

The qualifications possessed by Wesley for the headship of such an order as is here described were certainly remarkable : he was fitted for this office both by what he was and what he was not. The complete detachment from all personal feeling, which has hitherto perhaps appeared in these pages in a somewhat unpleasing light, was unmixed gain to him as ruler of the Wesleyans. This it was in great measure which enabled him in a very peculiar manner to divest rebuke of offence. He certainly possessed a power of awakening the conscience without irritating the temper such as would at once qualify him to carry out his ideal of perfect openness and conceal from him the dangers by which such an attempt was beset. The most frequent instance of this power was in the rebukes which he freely administered to all who cursed and swore in his presence, a practice for which at that day every chance walk must have given him an opportunity never, apparently, neglected. Yet never once do we hear of the rebuke being received otherwise than with gratitude. Once or twice, we may imagine, he was deceived by solemn irony, but the result cannot invariably be thus accounted for ; and we can imagine no higher testimony to a commission from Heaven, than that afforded by one who, interrupted in calling upon his Maker to damn and confound him, turns to thank the rebuker. Nor was it only against what may be called ecclesiastical offences that Wesley's rebuke was potent ; we find his influence exerted for good in exactly that direction in which it was most likely to be injurious. In 1748, a

quarrel arose in a family of which one member belonged to the Bands. The dispute between the vehement young disciple and the hostile elder rose very high, and the Wesleyan, a young girl, finding no words strong enough for her displeasure at hearing her idol abused, had recourse to blows. She then rushed to Wesley, and told him of the quarrel. 'Go and ask your aunt's pardon,' was his reply, and he was obeyed at once. When the girl's mother came in she found her daughter and sister clasped in each other's arms, in tears. 'Sister,' she cried, 'what is Sally doing to you?' 'She has just asked my pardon.' 'I never knew her do such a thing since she was born!' was her exclamation. 'Who taught you that?' 'My minister,' said the girl, and his influence was no longer a source of enmity in the family. Not long afterwards the mother, being on her death-bed, sent for Wesley, to his great surprise (for she did not belong to his Society), and asked him to pray with her. It was not till after her death that her daughter gave him the explanation. On another occasion, a boy of thirteen, who had been turned away from school for ill-behaviour, was so much impressed by an address of Wesley's against disobedience to parents that his father and his mother were startled at the sudden help they had acquired in his ready diligence: a change which lasted the short remainder of his life.

His power of effective rebuke was not less conspicuous when based on considerations which were common to him with all the world. In 1745, while he was walking up a street in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, he was suddenly assailed with a volley of abuse, seasoned of course with the usual allowance of oaths. He

stood quite still and heard the imprecations in silence, till his reviler, wearied out, gave him a rough push, and went away. On inquiry he found that this man had signalized himself by similar dealings to any of the Methodists who went that way; and upon this he sat down and wrote him the following letter:—

‘ROBERT YOUNG,—

‘I expect to see you between this and Friday, and to hear from you that you are sensible of your fault, otherwise, in pity to your soul, I shall be obliged to inform the magistrate of your assaulting me in the street yesterday.

‘I am, your real friend,

‘JOHN WESLEY.’

That Robert Young answered this summons in an hour or two, and promised a quite different behaviour, may, of course, be ascribed to his wish to avoid Wesley's alternative; but, as he must have been prepared to brave this before meeting him, prudence cannot have been the only motive for his apology.

It may be thought absurd to speak of qualities which could only be called out in personal intercourse as accounting, in any degree, for Wesley's power of control over a Society which at his death numbered nearly 77,000 members on British soil. But in the first place Wesley's long life and wonderful powers of work spread his influence over a surface which we can hardly measure without dismissing from our minds that available to an average life; we must imagine two or three men working together to estimate what can be done by a man who lived till eighty-eight, who

reduced the natural need for rest to a minimum, and never left a moment idle. In the next place, the effect of this kind of influence is not limited to those who actually come into personal contact with it. The repose and strength given by the knowledge of there being a definite, ultimate authority to fall back upon, is felt far beyond the range of those who have any practical experience of this authority. The principle of authority in the infancy of Methodism was thus tried under advantages which it is not likely ever to meet with again. To all the attraction which is afforded by the existence of any external guide was added that of a guide who had as much a genius for this spiritual direction as Marlborough for generalship. And so far Lord Macaulay's eulogy is fully justified.

On the other hand, the rapid growth of that order is explicable quite as much by the demands which called for it as by anything personal to its ruler. The Methodist Society—as well as the United Brethren, who made such large contemporaneous progress—satisfied one of the strongest impulses of our nature. Every Methodist was definitely and formally the member of a body. The yearning for some common standing-ground broader than that of mere kinship, stronger than that of mere nationality, must be strong at every time; perhaps it was especially strong during the eighteenth century. A reaction from the work of the Reformation swept many at that time into Romanism, and collected many more into little societies, cemented by a common interest in the things of eternity. But nowhere would this instinct meet with such absolute satisfaction as in the ranks of Methodism. Here the worshipper was bound to his neighbours by a partici-

him plainly and sharply for his rough untractable spirit and bitter zeal for opinions so greatly obstructive of the work of God!' This would seem simply childish to most people, but it was no mere theory with Wesley. The following letter to Sir William Lowther shows how simple a matter it seemed to him to set right one of whom he could have known very little, upon a point upon which he could have known less. 'I reverence you for your office as a magistrate. I believe you to be an honest, upright man; I love you for having protected an innocent people from their cruel and lawless oppressors: but so much the more am I obliged to say that I fear you are covetous, that you love the world, and if you do, as sure as the word of God is true, you are not in a state of salvation. Oh, sir, I beseech you, for the sake of your immortal soul, examine yourself if you do not love money! If so, you cannot love God.'

Who can say, from reading this letter, whether the charge was just or unjust?—or whether, being just, it was likely to do good or harm? All we can be certain of is that the question which would seem to most of us a preliminary without which we could not seek for divine help any more than we could expect miraculous light if we shut the shutters, never occurred to the mind of the writer. In other words, life was so far made easier to him, and to those who thought as he did.

Whatever may have been the limitations of Methodism, it was proved upon the battle-fields of Germany to be no enervating delirium, but a stimulant to all manly life fitted to receive it. Among the army which, about the time that the first Methodist

Conference met, fought at Dettingen and Fontenoy, was a little band, the influence of which was felt in the sudden and enduring transformation of those who joined it. The marauder who had risked his neck for plunder would not, from the time he joined the Methodists, pick an apple or a bunch of grapes; the drunkard was sober; the habitual swearer never uttered an oath: but in the day of battle the Methodist was distinguished from his companions, not indeed by his absolute fearlessness,—for that was probably no distinction,—but by his meeting death not only with courage, but with rapture. The British army under George II. boasted no truer specimens of English manhood than the Methodists.

Another exponent of Methodism, Wesley's 'Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,' published this year (1744), offers another side on which the reader can dwell with equal satisfaction. This tract affords so favourable a specimen of Wesley's style, and gives his view of the doctrine he preached so distinctly, that the following quotation, though somewhat long, forms a fitting conclusion to this sketch of the organization of Methodism:—'We see on every side either men of no religion at all, or of a lifeless formal religion. We are grieved at the sight, and should greatly rejoice if by any means we might convince some that there is a better religion to be attained, a religion worthy of God that gave it. And this we conceive to be none other than love, the loving God as the fountain of all the good we have received or hope to receive, and every soul which God hath made as our own soul. This love we believe to be the medicine of life, the never-failing remedy for all the



evils of a disordered world, for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is is humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering, a peace that passeth all understanding, and the whole image of God. This religion we have been following after for many years, but all this time seeking wisdom we found it not: we were spending our strength in vain. And now, being under full conviction of this, we declare it to all mankind, for we desire that they may go the straight way to the religion of love, even by faith. Now faith, supposing the Scripture to be of God, is the demonstrative evidence of things not seen, the supernatural element of things invisible, not perceived by eyes of flesh, or by any of our natural senses or faculties. Faith is that divine evidence whereby the spiritual man discerneth God. It is with regard to the spiritual world what sense is with regard to the natural world. It is the spiritual sensation of every soul that is born of God; it is the feeling of the soul whereby a believer perceives the presence of Him in whom he lives, moves, and has his being, and indeed the whole invisible world, the entire system of things eternal. By this faith we are saved from all uneasiness of mind, from the anguish of a wounded spirit, from discontent, from fear, and sorrow of heart, from that inexpressible listlessness and weariness both of the world and ourselves which we had so helplessly laboured under for so many years,—especially when we were out of the hurry of the world and sunk in calm reflection. This we know and feel, and cannot but declare, saves every one that partakes of it both from sin and misery, from every unhappy and every unholy temper—

“Soft peace she brings ; wherever she arrives  
She builds our quiet, as she forms our lives ;  
Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even,  
And opens in each heart a little heaven.”

‘Perhaps if we only spoke of being saved by love you would have no great objection, but you do not comprehend what we say of being saved by faith ; I know you do not. . . . We grant nothing is more unreasonable than to imagine that such mighty effects as these can be wrought by that poor, empty, insignificant thing which the world calls faith. But suppose there be such a faith on the earth as the Apostle spoke of, such an intercourse between God and the soul—what is too hard for such a faith ? All things are possible to him that thus believeth, to him that thus walks with God, that is now a citizen of heaven, an inhabitant of eternity. We join with you,’ *i.e.* the men of reason, ‘in desiring a religion founded on reason, and every way agreeable thereto. But one question remains : What do you mean by reason ? I suppose you mean the eternal reason, the nature of things, the nature of God, and the nature of man, with the relations necessarily existing between them. Why, this is the religion we preach,—a religion evidently founded on, and every way agreeable to, natural reason, to the essential nature of things, to the nature of God, for it begins in knowing Him, it ends in doing His will : to the nature of man, for it begins in a man’s knowing himself to be what he truly is, foolish, vicious, miserable ; it goes on to point the true remedy for this, to make him truly wise, virtuous, and happy, as every thinking mind (perhaps with some implicit remembrance of what it originally was)

longs to be. It finishes all by restoring the due relations between God and man ; by uniting for ever the tender Father and the grateful, obedient son, the great Lord of all and the faithful servant, doing not his own will but the will of Him that sent him.

‘But perhaps by reason you mean the faculty of inferring one thing from another. There are many, it is confessed (particularly among those that are called mystic divines), that utterly decry the use of reason, thus understood, in religion, that condemn all reasoning concerning the things of God as utterly destructive of true religion. But we can in no wise agree with this. In Holy Writ, we find both our Lord and His Apostles continually reasoning with their opposers. We do not know in all the productions of ancient and modern times so close and solid a chain of argumentation as the Epistle to the Hebrews. And the strongest reasoner we have ever observed, except Jesus of Nazareth, was that Paul of Tarsus, the same who has left that plain direction, “In malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men.” We therefore not only allow but earnestly exhort all who seek after true religion to use the reason which God hath given them, in searching out the things of God. But your reasoning justly on any subject whatever presupposes true judgments already formed whereon to ground your argumentation. It is impossible, if your premisses are false, to infer from them true conclusions. You know likewise that before it is possible for you to form a true judgment of them it is absolutely necessary that you have a clear apprehension of the things of God, and that your ideas thereof be all fixed, distinct, and deter-

minate. And seeing our ideas are not innate, but must all originally come from our senses, it is certainly necessary that you have senses capable of discerning objects of this kind ; not those only which are called natural senses, which in this respect profit nothing, but spiritual senses exercised to discern spiritual good and evil. It is necessary that you have the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, emphatically so called ; that you have a new class of senses opened in your soul, not depending on organs of flesh and blood, to be the evidence of things not seen, as your bodily senses are of visible things, to be the avenues to the invisible world, and to furnish you with ideas of what the outward eye hath not seen nor the ear heard. And till you have these internal senses you can have no apprehension of divine things, no idea of them at all. Till then you can neither judge truly nor reason justly concerning them, seeing your reason has no ground whereon to stand, no materials to work upon. How will your reason pass from natural to spiritual ? What a gulf is here ! By what art will reason get over the immense chasm ? This cannot be till the Almighty come in to your succour, and give you that faith you have hitherto despised. Then upborne, as it were, on eagles' wings, your enlightened reason shall explore even the deep things of God, God Himself revealing them to you by His Spirit.'

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE WORLD AGAINST THE METHODISTS.

THE separation from Whitefield was consummated in the year 1741, when Wesley had attained his thirty-eighth year: half a century elapses between that event and the day when, in accordance with his own earnest aspiration, with no intervening twilight of inaction, 'he ceased at once to work and live.' Nearly two-thirds, therefore, of the life which an attempt is here made to delineate are yet untouched, which, to be brought within the space here allotted, must be given on a scale much reduced from that hitherto adopted, all chronological sequence indeed being abandoned. But this change of the point of view is needed for other reasons than those of convenience. The kind of interest excited by the history of a great religious movement, which belongs to the first portion of Wesley's life, is so different from the kind of interest excited by the history of a sect, which belongs to the last, that the two things are best treated separately. The persecution which, to the disgrace of the time, the order founded by Wesley received both from the spirit of popular turbulence and the spirit of ecclesiastical

dominion; the gradual consolidation of that order under these attacks, and the controversy which gave it, alone of all religious bodies sharing Wesley's views on the Atonement, an Arminian creed; the events finally by which it was distinctly separated from the Church:— all these have to be noticed in the space remaining to us. But the ceaseless journeys through every part of the British Isles, which gave to the last fifty years of Wesley's life a mingled character of restlessness and monotony, important to remember when we would estimate his unsparing devotion and unremitting toil, but not in any further way increasing our understanding of his character, and almost impossible to arrange into any historical framework, need only be mentioned in the most fragmentary allusion. We have only to do with the man as he represented a great religious movement; in its early stages he forms the symbol of all in it that is most vital, but as he becomes the centre of a hierarchy of his own, the interest of his history gradually changes its character, and passes out of the sphere of the present sketch.

The Methodists had to withstand an opposition originating in two sources: the clergy sought to put down the enthusiasts who shamed them by their conquests and angered them by their rivalry; the populace rose up against preachers who attacked their favourite diversions, offended their prejudices, and afforded them a good opportunity of indulging their taste for uproar and cruelty. The last was the strongest motive with the mob. The outrages of which we have now to hear were chiefly outbreaks of that fierce turbulent spirit of which every movement of the time bears trace; and their speedy quiescence

before the dominant spirit of Wesley evinces perhaps equally his calm resolute will and their essential shallowness.

Of these two kinds of attack, the one last mentioned is first to be noticed in detail. The hostility of the Church was a more important fact than the hostility of the mob, because it was more rational, but it was the last to come into prominence; the clergy of that day were the animating principle of the popular outbreaks against the Methodists before they carried on the war with their own weapons, and we have now to notice the warfare in which they only appeared indirectly.

The first occasion on which we hear of any public interruption of John Wesley's ministry is sufficiently characteristic of him to be narrated here, although it belongs to a period somewhat earlier than that with which we have now to do, and, so far from originating with the mob, was the act of one who considered himself to belong to the most distinguished section of humanity. When Wesley was preaching at Bath in the spring of 1739, the celebrated Beau Nash (why celebrated it is difficult to say, for at this distance of time it is impossible to make out anything remarkable in this foolish and kind-hearted adventurer) was at the height of his glory as monarch of Bath, and no doubt trembled for his empire when he watched 'the rich and great,' as Wesley called the fine people there, thronging the meadow when the dangerous rival was to preach. He resolved to confront him, anticipating, no doubt, an easy victory over the crazy parson who preached in the fields. The same expectation, or one of an opposite result, drew large crowds to the meadows

where Wesley was to preach ; and he was urged not to venture there, because 'no one knew what might happen.'

The 'rich and great' were on the spot in great force, and their champion, as Wesley calls Nash, coming up to him as he was telling them that the Scripture had concluded all under sin, asked him by whose authority he did these things. 'By the authority of Jesus Christ conveyed to me by the present Archbishop of Canterbury,' replied Wesley, 'when he laid hands on me and said, "Take thou authority to preach the Gospel."' 'This is contrary to Act of Parliament,' said Nash, who was not prepared for an argument ; 'this is a conventicle.' Wesley remarked that the present meeting not being seditious, the Act concerning conventicles did not apply to it. 'I say it does,' said Nash ; 'and, beside, your preaching frightens people out of their wits.' 'Sir, did you ever hear me preach?' 'No.' 'How then can you judge of what you have never heard?' 'Sir, by common report.' 'Common report is not enough ; give me leave to ask, sir, is not your name Nash?' 'My name is Nash.' 'Sir, I dare not judge you by common report. I think it not enough to judge by.' Nash's dishonourable gains at the gaming table were probably matter of common report. He was not at once to be repulsed, but his next attack was not skilful : 'I desire to know what all these people come here for,' he asked after a pause ; whereupon an old woman in the crowd cried out, 'You take care of your body, Mr. Nash, we take care of our souls, and for the good of our souls we come here.' This was unequivocal defeat ; and the enemy withdrew in all haste, leaving Wesley master of the field.



A year's interval separates this from the next event of a similar character: on August 4th, 1740, his evening exhortation was interrupted by the clamour of a woman of bad character, 'well known in those parts as neither fearing God nor regarding man.' 'The instant she broke out,' he writes in his journal, 'I turned full upon her, and declared the love the Lord had for her soul. She was at once abashed and silenced.'

Throughout the year 1740, the issue of these disturbances was invariable. At Bristol, on Sunday evening, the 14th of September, a crowd, collected round Wesley's door with no friendly purpose, was converted by a few words of exhortation from a shouting, riotous mob to a silent and attentive audience: and the incident was repeated more than once a little later at London.

Shortly afterwards an interruption took place which issued in a much more forcible testimony to Wesley's preaching than even this sudden change. As Wesley was expounding the Bible at the Foundry a young man rushed in with a volley of oaths in which his exposition was drowned. Indignant at this interruption, the congregation closed upon him, and forced him out of the building. Wesley, observing what they had done, called out to them to let him in again, 'that our Lord might bid his chains fall off.' The sermon was concluded without any further interruption, and before the congregation separated the intruder stood forward, and declared at once his illegal profession and his renunciation of it. He had been a smuggler, but vowed to renounce this occupation for ever, 'for he was now resolved to have the Lord for his God.'

Even the dumb animals, Wesley seems to have thought, recognized a sanctity in these Methodist gatherings which they would not be forced to invade. A baited bull at Pensford, set on by a mob of dogs and men (the second time we hear of such an incident), was, says Wesley (March 19th, 1742), 'wiser than his drivers,' for he continually ran round and round instead of among them, till the mob seized the poor exhausted animal by main force, and thrust him up to the table which formed Wesley's pulpit, which they strove to upset by pushing him against it, 'who of himself stirred no more than a log of wood,' and allowed Wesley to push away his head without doing him any injury. The table was upset in the struggle, but the preacher, caught in the arms of friends, was borne off in triumph.

In London the authorities were not slack in coming forward to do their part against these mobs. On the last day of 1741, Sir John Ganson, the Lord Mayor, came to tell Wesley that he was under no necessity of suffering the molestation of these riotous mobs. 'I and all other Middlesex justices,' he concluded, 'have orders to do you justice.' This interview, sought out by the Lord Mayor to encourage Wesley to call in the civil power against the rabble, is a significant indication of the attitude of all authority unbiassed by the Church, towards the Methodists. The fact was that the assurance of protection against illegal outrage was not by any means a superfluous piece of information. The difficulties of the Government in dealing with the mobs of that day are forcibly brought home to us by the fact that about this time (1738) alterations were made in the premises of the College of Physicians,

in order that criminals might be carried from Newgate to the Old Bailey without the danger of an armed attack from their confederates. These frequent riots were perhaps equally cause and effect of the timidity with which the laws were enforced against the originators of these riots. 'There is no country in the world,' says the editor of 'The Political State of Great Britain,' in his remarks on some riots at Spitalfields in 1739, 'where mobs are either more common or more dangerous than our own, yet the laws are as severe here as elsewhere, and, *though not often put in execution*, yet they are far from being obsolete.' A special cause for timidity at this time was supplied by the press for seamen, consequent on the outbreak of the war with Spain. This so often put the officers of the Government in the position of disturbers of the public peace that rigid investigation of all uproar would have been dangerous. Such being the method taken by Government to provide itself with servants, we could hardly expect it to be very vigorous in repressing uproar.

Wesley had not many weeks to wait before he stood in need of the protection thus promised to him. On January 25th, 1742, a tumult at Long Lane, in which the audience were in danger of their lives from the large stones thrown in through the windows, gave him occasion to avail himself of Sir John Ganson's promise. 'You must not go on thus,' he said, addressing the mob; 'I am ordered by the magistrate, who is in this respect to us the minister of God, to inform him of those who break the laws of God and the king. And I must do it if you persist therein, otherwise I am a partaker of your sin.' His words only serving to increase their fury,

he proceeded to deeds: three or four of his congregation were ordered to take hold of the foremost offender, and give him in charge to a constable. He was immediately obeyed, the man was brought in discharging a volley of oaths at his captors, without any of his companions attempting to rescue him: he was taken to the nearest justice and bound over to the next Sessions, but upon promise of amendment Wesley withdrew the prosecution. A striking scene took place at this riot. Two of the chief offenders, a man and a woman of bad character, were suddenly smitten with that powerful impression of which Wesley's preaching was the channel to so many souls, and coming into the house together, the woman fell on her knees, and desired her companion 'never to forget the mercy which God had shown to his soul.'

The lawless brutality to which the Methodists were subjected in the country, was attested by a trial held at Gloucester on the 3d of March. A Society formed under the preaching of Whitefield in this neighbourhood had been subject to all the approximations to the discipline of the Inquisition which the spirit of the time still allowed to be possible. It was only, however, the local magistracy who were on the side of the mob. The rioters, who had amused themselves by breaking the Methodists' arms and windows, learnt at the Gloucester assizes from the lips of the judge, 'that, supposing the Methodists to be heterodox, it belonged to the ecclesiastical government to call them to account, and rioters were not to be reformers.' The verdict was returned for the plaintiffs, after an opportunity being given for the fullest evidence against them in open court, among a neighbourhood where

all influential persons were against them. Such an opportunity eliciting no charge, even unfounded, of immorality—no well-founded charge even of indiscretion—must be allowed to stand as a testimonial to the general results of Methodism among the lower orders, such as it needs the strongest and most definite evidence to counterbalance.

Meantime the Wesleyan division of Methodists had not less opposition to encounter. During the year 1742 Wesley's sphere of action was much enlarged. His ministry had in the interval between his return from Georgia and this year been confined—if such a word is applicable to pastoral care extending over an area of many hundred miles in extent—to London, Bristol, and Wales. Now, however, he extended his ceaseless journeys to include the north of England. His intercourse with the Kingswood colliers had perhaps aroused his interest for their brethren of the north, and it was among the rough inhabitants of the Black Country that Methodism found some of its staunchest adherents and its fiercest enemies. It was here that the smouldering turbulence which had before shown itself in interruption flamed up into outrage. The fiercest outburst of this anti-Methodist fury took place at Wednesbury, a small town which the reader will recall as a station on the North Western Railway. Here in 1742 Charles Wesley had preached to the colliers, and had formed about 400 of them into a Society, at first with the approbation of Mr. Egginton, the clergyman; but this sympathy was, according to Wesley's own account, forfeited by some indiscretion on the part of one of the Methodists, and he thenceforward became their bitter enemy.

Here, during the summer of 1743, the Methodists were the subjects of the most brutal outrages, not only unchecked by those whose duty it was to watch over the execution of the laws, but actively encouraged by them. The victims of these outrages were well-to-do people, and the amount of damage suffered by them was estimated—evidently at no extravagant computation when we read what was done—at £500. In about eighty houses there were not eight panes of glass left unbroken, or any valuable article left undestroyed. A chemist had all his medicines thrown away and his bottles broken; a shop beside the Methodist meeting-house was unroofed; a farmer had his poultry killed; a spinning-wheel, the only resource of a widow with a large family, was destroyed; shops were gutted, furniture and linen were burnt, and the Methodist quarter of Wednesbury and the neighbourhood was mapped out by houses that seemed to belong to a sacked town. Some of the victims, terrified by the threats and uproar of the mob, yielded to the unfortunate policy of endeavouring to buy them off,—an attempt which in making the riots lucrative, was not very likely to shorten them. Human beings were as much the aim of the clubs and stones of the rioters as glass and earthenware; and the sufferers, beaten and abused, must have been thankful to escape without broken bones from their tormentors. Sex was no protection: pregnant women were ill-treated—in one case in the most horrible manner; but it must be added that this one case grew into the plural in the Methodist accounts, and gave an effect of fiendish barbarity to what is

rather to be described as the brutality of a bear-baiting, gin-drinking set of savages, hard-hearted rather than ferocious. 'We have done our work; pay us our wages,' one of the mob was heard to say to the churchwarden, and large jugs of beer were immediately brought in to refresh the labourers in this disgraceful harvest. 'Well, my lads,' Mr. Eggington addressed the mob who were fresh from gutting the shops and breaking the heads of the Methodists, 'he that has done it from zeal for the Church, I do not blame him. If these men should come into our parish,' he pursued, 'your help will be needful.' A brother clergyman was seen among the mob, encouraging their outrages 'during the actual commission.' The neighbouring justices were of the same mind; 'I suppose you follow those parsons that come about,' was thought a sufficient justification for refusing a warrant against the Anti-Methodists. Constables were, with more excuse, afraid of executing the warrants when obtained; to take up a rioter under penalty of having one's house pulled about one's ears was a duty which required some courage to perform.

A paper lay for signature at the public-house, declaring that the signers would 'never sing, nor read, nor pray together again, nor hear Mr. Wesley preach,' and the mob was sent round to drag in the Methodists to give their recantation as the price of immunity from farther outrage. Here and there a frightened heretic was persuaded to affix his signature, but refusal was general. A man, whose wife told him as he reviewed the ruins of his goods, 'If I had come into their terms, not one pennyworth would have been hurt,' could answer that 'if he had found his goods

whole because she had denied the truth, he should never have been easy as long as he lived.' Another, under the threat of having his house burnt to the ground, told the mob he would not sign the paper if they tore him to pieces. One woman, on being told by a fellow-sufferer that 'he took joyfully the spoiling of his goods,' could return with a truer Christianity that seeing so much wickedness she could not rejoice, but she blessed God she could bear it patiently.

What is most remarkable in the account is the calm, unexcited tone of the sufferers. The narrative, which is taken from depositions all were ready to attest on oath, contains hardly a strong word. 'It is impossible to describe the outrages that have been committed,' is the only passage that savours of exaggeration. We cannot read the narrative without feeling the influence of a truly supernatural power, raising these provincial shopkeepers and artisans into a region where the passions of hatred and revenge could not enter. The injuries were in a great measure of that kind against which high motives seem weakest—injuries against property; and that stream of riot, principally fed by the stimulants of the clergy and the love of turbulence, would be increased by many a minor rill of private spite and ill-will, more difficult to meet without infection than even the spirit of persecution. Yet we meet nowhere with the slightest hint that the Methodists brought this persecution on themselves by anything but their indiscretion,—an accusation which we may be very sure would have at once have sprung up on the slightest foundation. The silence of their enemies leaves them in a position much higher than that of blamelessness.



These outrages, continued through the spring and summer of 1743, had undergone a lull of some months when Wesley arrived at Wednesbury on October 20th, and revived their fury. Here he preached in the heart of the town to a congregation of whom he says, with his usual easiness of belief, that every one present felt the power of God. The impression, whatever it was, could not have been very permanent; the town of Wednesbury was not so large but that a few hundred people could not have prevented what followed. He had retired to the house of a friend, and was quietly writing in the afternoon, when he was disturbed by a sudden cry that the mob had beset the house. Wesley disdained the idea of seeking human help in this emergency; he called together the household, and prayed with them that God would disperse the mob, which happened within about half an hour. 'Now is the time for us to go,' said Wesley, but his host vehemently and successfully opposed this intention; and he sat down again, though foreseeing that the mob would not fail to reassemble. His previsions were soon justified. In the dusk of the October afternoon a crowd surrounded the house again, shouting, 'Bring out the minister; we will have the minister.' The minister was determined to have them: he desired the ringleader of the mob to be brought to him, and he was obeyed as exactly as if he had been backed by an army. 'After a few sentences exchanged between us, the lion was become a lamb,' and the same change was operated on two or three of his companions, whom he brought in at Wesley's desire. Having thus secured the chief of the disturbers, Wesley desired them to

make way for him while he went to the raging mob without. Defenceless as he was, he left the house, and confronted the rough savages who surrounded it; called for a chair, and having raised himself upon it in order to be clearly heard and seen, asked his opposers what they wanted with him. 'We want you to go to the justice's,' was the cry. 'With all my heart,' said Wesley, and added a few words which brought over the capricious enthusiasm of the mob to his side. 'The gentleman,' they cried, 'is an honest gentleman, and we will spill our blood in his defence.' That being unnecessary, the next best step, one would have thought, was to let him go quietly back to his friends; but the popular logic arrived at a different conclusion, and insisted on carrying off the object of their enthusiasm to the nearest justice, at two miles' distance. Here we are, as often elsewhere, impressed with the narrowness of Wesley's vision. That a mob ready to shed their blood for him should insist on dragging him before a justice does not seem to have struck him as needing a word of explanation, and none is forthcoming elsewhere.

The procession started in the twilight, and rain and darkness coming on before it had proceeded a mile, made the walk to the justice's—a Mr. Lane, of Bentley Hall—no agreeable journey. Nor were they here at the end of their journey. The magistrate, who must have shared a large responsibility for the riots of the spring, was not now going to exert himself to prevent their repetition when the chief offender was the only victim, and sent a servant with a recommendation to carry Mr. Wesley back again. His son, who followed the servant to the door, was

perhaps rather alarmed at the sight of so many grimy faces fading into indistinctness as they receded from the gleam that issued from the opening door. 'What is the matter?' he asked. 'Why, an't please you,' shouted one of the mob, 'they sing psalms all day, nay, and make folks rise at five in the morning. What would your worship advise us to do?' 'To go home and be quiet,' said the young man, perhaps somewhat relieved at this bathos; and then he seems to have receded, and left the wild army debating their plans in the rainy night.

Their aimless eagerness was, however, not yet all spent, and in spite of the practical refutation their scheme had just received they were not yet ready to give up the attitude of useful public servants bringing a dangerous character before the authorities,—an attitude very significant as to the part the latter had previously taken. The random advice of one of the convoy, to carry their prisoner to another justice, was at once taken, and at about seven o'clock they arrived at the door of Mr. Persehouse, a justice of the peace at Walsall. The excuse that he was in bed, which had also been given by Mr. Lane, and which was a very improbable story at seven o'clock in the evening, shows that they were profoundly indifferent at least to the fate of the man whom they left a defenceless prisoner in the hands of the mob. Being baffled this second time, the course which would have appeared so much wiser at first at last suggested itself to them, and they retraced their steps towards Wednesbury, about fifty of them constituting themselves a guard to their prisoner. It was not a superfluous precaution. While they were hesitating at the door of Mr.

Persehouse another mob was gathering, and it burst upon Wesley and his convoy before they had gone a hundred yards, scattering the men who were guarding their prisoner, and carried him off. It is not easy to realize his situation in their hands. The dark night, the fierce hellish cries, the rush of a fierce mob beneath whose feet he would, had he once fallen, have been trampled to death in a moment, are all dimmed for the reader by the impression of absolute fearlessness which intervenes like a screen between us and those circumstances of peril.

The roar would have made any words of Wesley's at first quite inaudible. As the outcry was in some degree lulled he addressed those within hearing, but to little purpose; and amid these shrieking furious savages was hurried from one end of the town to the other. His guides hurried and dragged him down a steep hill slippery with wet coal dust. Yet he, a small man, was able to keep his footing against the attempts of some hundreds tugging so hard at his clothes to throw him down that one flap was left in their hands. A man behind him aimed many blows at his head with a bludgeon, any one of which might have stunned him, but all were turned aside by the unsteadiness of the assailant—Wesley himself being jammed in between his conductors, and unable to move to the right or the left. Twice indeed he was struck, once with such violence that the blood gushed from his mouth, but he 'felt no more pain from the blow than if I had been touched with a straw.' Another man, rushing up as if to strike him, let his hand rest gently on his abundant hair, and only said, 'What soft hair he has!' There were fierce outcries of 'Knock

him down, kill him at once!' and he was roughly restrained in any attempt to escape from them. Once in attempting to enter the open door of a large house he was pulled back by the hair of his head. A second similar attempt was defeated by the refusal of the inmates to admit him, 'or the mob would pull the house down.' Wesley upon this set his back to the door, and began demanding the reason of such treatment. 'What have I done?' he asked; 'which of you have I wronged in word or deed?' Their senseless uproar soon silenced him, but the leaders of the tumult had been won over to him. This was no trifling advantage, for one of them was a prizefighter; he or one of his companions now told Wesley, 'Sir, I will spend my life for you. Follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head.' His words were enforced by a man in the shop, who, though he had not had the courage to receive Wesley within his doors, was ashamed at this treatment of an unoffending man by his townspeople, and called out to them to let him go. A party was now formed in his favour, and closing round him, conveyed him down to the bridge, which was the way out of the town. Here, however, the mob rallied again, and it was by a more private passage over a mill-dam that Wesley at last escaped out of their hands, and reached Wednesbury safe soon after ten.

The account is interesting from its illustration of the capricious, aimless fury of the rabble. Here was one mob turning out in the dark and the rain to drag a man, against whom they had nothing whatever to bring forward, before a magistrate, for whom at the very time of hurrying him off they declared themselves ready to shed their blood; while another tore him out

of their hands only to hurry him through the town and scream themselves hoarse, and then let him escape without serious injury.

The sense of a supernatural guidance, which these events impressed on the mind of John Wesley, is somewhat dimmed for the reader by the impression of his own robust temperament and fearless nature; but in the case of his brother there was no screen between perils such as these and the spirit which remained unaffected by them, except trust in God. In 1743 a young ensign at Sheffield, who must have gone very much out of his way to fall foul of the Methodists, forced his way into the house where Charles Wesley was preaching, swearing and railing, and heading a mob who assailed him and his congregation with weapons more forcible than oaths. When Charles Wesley prayed for sinners as 'servants of their master the devil,' the ensign, with an ingenuous acceptance of the description, resented this as an attack upon George II., drew his sword, and rushed full upon the preacher, 'threatening revenge for my abusing the king his master.' 'I fear God and honour the king,' said Charles, smiling calmly, and opening his breast to the sword. Of course the wretched lad was not going to commit murder, but it was no mere good sense which could have kept the timid and gentle Charles Wesley calm at that moment. The senseless fury of his opponent seemed suddenly frozen in contact with this imperturbable peace; 'he gave a deep sigh, put up his sword, and quickly left the place.' Similar riots took place this year while Charles Wesley was in Cornwall, and the rabble showed their zeal for the Church by breaking into the meetings armed with clubs, and

illtreating his congregations, particularly the women. 'Sir,' said Charles, addressing one who was engaged in this courageous warfare, 'you appear like a gentleman' (the word we may believe was used in rather a peculiar sense); 'I desire you would show it by restraining those of the baser sort. Let them strike the men or me if they will, but not hurt poor helpless women and children.' Great is the power of trust! The ruffian was from that moment active on the side of order.

The Staffordshire justices, careful as they had been to avoid all interference with the riot at the time it was committed, were not fastidious in their reference to it afterwards. Within a few days a notice appeared 'to all high constables and other of his Majesty's peace officers within the county of Staffordshire,' informing them, 'that whereas we his Majesty's justices of the peace have received information that several disorderly persons, calling themselves Methodist preachers, go about raising riots to the great damage of his Majesty's liege people . . . these are in his Majesty's name to command you to make diligent search after the said Methodist preachers, and to bring them before us.' Then followed the signatures of the two magistrates before whom Wesley had been taken, and who had refused to see him!

Nor were the legal authorities content with merely screening the enemies of the Methodists. The only life actually lost in these persecutions was that of a certain Thomas Beard, who sunk under the hardships endured by him while pressed for a soldier, one of the favourite means of oppression exercised against this unpopular body. 'I see there is neither law nor justice

for a man that is called a Methodist,' said John Nelson, one of Wesley's lay preachers, when he was taken before the commissioners; and an attempt was once made to apprehend Wesley himself. Another instance of persecution was commemorated in the little town of Hornby, Wesley tells us, in a little cluster of houses all inhabited by Methodists, who had been turned out of their original habitations by zealous anti-Methodist landlords.

In reviewing the history of persecution of which a mere sample is here given, the reader cannot but ask Was there really nothing in the conduct of the Methodists which afforded it some shadow of excuse? Is it possible that such acts as have been described should be committed and the actors screened from punishment without some kind of provocation on their part? The call to repentance has always stirred up vehement displeasure, no doubt, but outrages like these, perpetrated with entire impunity, appear to need some further explanation.

If the Methodist movement was not allied with some indiscretion, it was unlike every other religious movement whatever; and one instance, as we have seen, was mentioned and blamed by Wesley himself. But nothing that could form the flimsiest pretext for the treatment received by his followers can be brought home to him. He does not appear to have separated families; he never went where he had not a perfect right to be; he addressed those whom he regarded as beyond his pale in courteous and moderate language; he never thrust his exhortations on anybody. Some of the virtues he enforced on the members of his order were strictly secular; he expelled some



Methodists, for instance, for 'idleness and laziness,' and he made others return the bribes they had taken for their parliamentary vote. The attacks of enemies, and even the accounts of alienated disciples, may be read without extracting a single anecdote that we should think discreditable to him; indeed it is from this source that we derive much valuable, because unconscious, testimony to the good influence of his code on secular life. We cannot then admit that Wesley's errors of judgment or limitations of sympathy had even the very slightest share in producing the popular fury of which instances have just been given.

The share which the ministers of the Church of England had in stirring up that fury will be noticed afterwards. But when we have added the influence of professional jealousy to that of popular turbulence and the hatred of a reformer, we have not entirely exhausted the sources of anti-Methodist zeal. It was fed by the most obstinate and unreasoning of British prejudices, inflamed by a danger which we have long since forgotten, and the effects of which we can hardly calculate.

One of the accusations often repeated against Wesley was that of being a Papist; and so important did it seem to him that once, when under circumstances of national peril all Roman Catholics were desired to quit London, he put off a journey to avoid seeming to comply with this injunction. To us, with our present associations of Methodism, the belief seems as absurd as it was untrue, but it was not altogether absurd. That there was, in Wesley's day, a strong tendency towards Romanism is proved by evidence not very

easy to bring forward here, because its cogency depends upon quantity, and not quality. The only men of mark who are the least associated with this movement are Gibbon, in the transitory conversion of his boyhood, and Butler, in the ungrounded suspicion which attached to his old age. Literature, properly so called, affords us, therefore, no evidence in this direction. On the other hand, we might have suspected that there would be a current towards Rome at this time, without any evidence whatever. The arguments used against the deists and infidels of that day took something of this tone: 'The question is not so much whether we can prove Christianity to be true as whether you can prove it to be false. It will do you no harm to accede to it if false; it will do you the greatest harm to have dissented from it if it is true. A wise man will always be on the safe side.' Those who were convinced by this kind of reasoning would ask themselves what *was* the safe side. There was a Church then existing which declared the impossibility of salvation beyond its pale while no body declared the impossibility of salvation within its pale. Surely it must be better, if safety was to be considered, to belong to this. As Christianity was to deism, so was Roman Catholicism to Christianity; and the same arguments which converted the deist would, if they were logically carried out, convert the Protestant.

At any rate, the fact that Roman Catholics acquired many converts at this time cannot be doubted. The danger was recognized by all Protestants. 'There is scarcely a petty coffee-house in London,' says a newspaper of the day (*Free Briton*, January 1735),

'where there is not a Popish lecture read on Sunday evenings;' a much more vigorous writer in the *Old Whig* for March of this year, estimates the number of Roman Catholic priests in London at 10,000; while another paper (*Common Sense*, 1744) declared that 300 Papists held some public office. 'Popish bishops,' we are told, 'distinguished by mock titles, and invested by a solemn show of authority, have, it is well known, methodically parcelled out this kingdom into four districts, over which they exercise a regular jurisdiction' (Charge by Archdeacon Sterne, 1737). 'There is a great and grievous evil among us,' says Bishop Sherlock in a letter to the clergy of 1750; 'I mean the great increase of Popery in this kingdom.' His predecessor, Bishop Gibson, had endeavoured to meet the evil by a collection of 'Select Discourses' in several volumes, 'which with great pains he had collected,' we are told in an obituary notice, 'upon the principal heads of controversy between Protestants and Papists.' This polemic ardour was not confined to the Established Church. The Dissenters contributed their services to the common defence in a series of anti-Popery lectures at Salters' Hall, in the winter of 1734-35, every evening for fifteen weeks—the Quakers being instanced by the *Grub Street Journal* (June 1737) as the only exception to the general tenor of nonconforming zeal. In spite of these efforts the Dissenters were reproached by a poet in the *Gentleman's Magazine* with being the cause of the evil they were trying to avert:—

'We mourn Rome's superstition daily growing;  
But is not to your schism this evil owing?'

From other quarters the Church is impugned as

responsible for the evil. 'Our clergy's showing themselves cordial friends to our Protestant Dissenting brethren,' says the *Free Briton* for January 1735, 'would strengthen the Church against the Papists, for 'tis an irresistible argument with them that if the Church condemns separation from herself, she is as much condemned for her separation from them.' Volunteers in this warfare were not wanting, and a letter to a member of Parliament (*General Evening Post*, July 1746), in which it is suggested that 'our legislators should enact some penalty on every Protestant who marries with a Papist,' affords us a sample of a kind of Protestant zeal common enough in those days. The most whimsical form in which it showed itself was the apparently serious remonstrance of a writer in a newspaper called the *British Champion*, with 'that bright sex to whom in a great measure we owe our happy reformation,' for wearing Capuchin cloaks and hoods, which were, it seems, in fashion at the time, and through the instrumentality of which the public 'would be taught to view the cowl not only with patience, but complacency.' This is one of those trifles which show the current of superficial popular feeling better than larger matters, and help us to understand that ignorant angry suspicion by which two of the most dissimilar forms of Christianity were confounded together.

There were, however, some points of resemblance between the Romish Church and Methodism; a strict religious body, meeting in private houses and enjoining confession and fasting, would often remind the superficial observer of the Romanists. But it was not so much this or that peculiarity which would have this

effect; it was the one fundamental fact of Methodism so often insisted on in these pages, that it was originally not a sect, but an order. Wesley had described the parochial organization of the Church of England as 'a rope of sand' compared with his Society, and a Roman Catholic priest might have done the same. They had both a kind of organization which the Church had not, and in the eyes of the world this was a very striking resemblance. And it was exactly this resemblance which revived the popular hatred of Romanism. There was in that day a hostility to this Church quite independent of religion. In fact only a small part of English hatred to Romanism is religious. It is not any opinion about justification by faith; it is the sturdy John Bull hatred to a foreign authority that stirs up such a strong fiery indignation against any papal claim. The Roman Catholic is a foreigner on English soil, he belongs not so much to those of his own race as those of his own creed, and with whatever dislike to that creed we regard him there mingles some patriotism, and a good deal of inhospitality.

This is true even of our own day, when the pretensions of Rome have long been politically harmless; but a century and a quarter ago this was very far indeed from being the case. Through the earlier part of the eighteenth century there was a body of men on British soil who watched their opportunity to seat a Frenchman—such to all intents and purposes was the son of James II.—on the throne. In time of peace indeed the Jacobite party was not formidable. The English did not love the unpleasant old German who occupied the throne, but they hated the 'Popish Pre-

tender' who was watching his chance to replace him, and till war broke out his chance was not much. But the fact mentioned in a former chapter—that the powerful minister who was far more truly than George II. the ruler of England, is believed to have made some kind of overtures to the exiled Stuarts—shows what their chance would be in time of commotion; and the war which broke out with Spain in 1739 swept Walpole into private life, and turned the Pretender to a possible invader. It was not our doing that he was unsuccessful. On February 16th, 1744, when our army was in Germany, a spectator at Falmouth made out sixteen French sail in the Channel, and a custom-house smack was chased by them the same day within a few miles of the Cornish coast. A week later London was thrown into violent commotion by 'an express from Brighthelmstone, in Sussex, with certain advice that fourteen French men-of-war were off that port on the 22d,' and the news brought by a traveller who had found means to escape from Calais that he had seen there the person whom that fleet was to transport—Charles Edward Stuart. But while loyal addresses were pouring in to George II., while suspected Jacobites were being arrested, expresses rushing off to Holland for the reinforcements owed us in case of invasion, and our ordnance manufacturers working day and night to supply the sudden demand for warlike stores, the winds and the waves were saving us all peril and all glory. On March 5th the English admiral timidly ventured round the South Foreland, saw the French fleet within a mile or two, and thought it too late in the day to engage them. As the night fell the wind rose, and in the morning the only remains

of the French men-of-war in those waters were the cables and anchors which were wrenched away in the storm.

The reader is reminded of the details of this threatened French invasion of 1744, though they are fresh in the pages of our most picturesque historian, because, its failure not being a monument of British glory, it has been wholly cast into the shade by the Jacobite rising of the following year, which carries the imagination to Scotland rather than to France, and because we cannot understand either the anti-Popery zeal of that day, or the curious persistence with which a suspicion of Popery attached to a religious body much more really hostile to the Roman Catholic Church than the Bishops were, unless we fully realize that to the men of that day Popery meant a great national danger. And the very fact that at first sight it seems out of place to refer to this national danger in a sketch of the rise of Methodism is a proof of the point an attempt is here made to establish, that in all the agitation of that crisis the Methodists must have struck the average Briton as hardly less remote from all the terror and wrath and strenuous resolve which was occupying his soul than if they had belonged to different nations.

Wesley could not be called indifferent to the national peril. During the alarm which preceded this threatened invasion, he writes, 'We observe Friday, February 17th, as a day of solemn fasting and prayer. . . In the evening I expounded Daniel iii. and those words in particular, "The God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace. But if not, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image."' But immediately afterwards he

goes on, 'I received an account from James Jones of another kind of invasion in Staffordshire,' and then more pages are given to the account of riots similar to those already described than lines to the French invasion. 'If the French had come,' he says in his account of the outrages, 'could they have done more?' Throughout the following month the only allusion to the great national peril (besides an address to the king, which will be given below) is in the account of his answering a summons to appear before the justices of Surrey in order to take an oath of allegiance to the king, and sign a declaration against Popery. His heart and soul were absorbed in another warfare, which left him little time or thought for anything but itself. There seems a long gap between this and 'bringing the Pretender with me under the name of John Downes,' which he tells us was one of the accusations against him; but in the day of national panic, when bigotry is stimulated by terror, some who are most remote from the source of hatred and fear will be confounded with it. And thus it happens that, when reckoning up the sources of anti-Methodist zeal, we must add to those which have already been enumerated the unreasoning wrath of an angry, frightened, suspicious Protestantism.

In dealing with this imputation of Romanism, Wesley laboured under great difficulties, as he could hardly bring the Methodists forward as a body without avowing their distinctness from the Church of England. At the time of the sudden anti-Papist fervour which succeeded the attempted invasion, when addresses were pouring in to George II. from all sides, Wesley was much pressed to add one from the



Methodists. He accordingly drew up an address, which, however, on consideration he did not send, and George II. was spared the perusal 'of the humble address of the Societies in England and Wales, in derision called Methodists,' for which omission, if he had known of it, he would no doubt after his frequent perusal of similar documents have been rather grateful. It is, however, worthy of the reader's attention, and is accordingly given here :—

‘MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,—

‘So inconsiderable as we are, “a people scattered and peeled and trodden under foot from the beginning hitherto,” we should in no wise have presumed even on this great occasion to open our lips to your Majesty had we not been induced to do so by two considerations: the one, that in spite of all our remonstrances on that head, we are still traduced as inclined to Popery, and consequently disaffected to your Majesty; the other, that in spite of all our remonstrances on that head, we are continually represented as a peculiar sect of men separating ourselves from the Established Church.

‘Upon these considerations we think it incumbent upon us, if we must stand as a distinct body from our brethren, to tender for ourselves our most dutiful regards to your sacred Majesty, and to declare in the presence of Him we serve, the King of kings and Lord of lords, that we are a part (however mean) of that Protestant Church established in these kingdoms, that we unite together for this, and no other end, to promote, so far as we may be able, justice, mercy, and truth, the glory of God, and peace and good will

among men; that we detest and abhor the fundamental doctrines of the Church of Rome, and are steadily attached to your Majesty's royal person and illustrious House.

'We cannot indeed either say or do more than we apprehend consistent with the written word of God, but we are ready to obey your Majesty to the uttermost in all things we conceive to be agreeable thereto: and we earnestly exhort all with whom we converse to fear God and honour the king. We of the clergy in particular put all men in mind to revere the higher powers as of God, and continually declare, "Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake."

'Silver and gold, most of us own, we have none, but such as we have we beseech your Majesty to accept, together with our hearts and prayers. May He who hath bought us with His blood, the Prince of all kings of the earth, fight against all enemies of your Majesty with the two-edged sword that cometh out of His mouth. And when He calleth your Majesty from this throne, full of years and victories, may it be with that voice, "Come, receive the kingdom prepared for thee from the beginning of the world!"

'These are the continual prayers of your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects,

'JOHN WESLEY, &c.'

These professions of loyalty were more than borne out by the attitude of the Methodists to the civil power. Through all the tumults above described, and others too similar to need mention, though some were of an

even more aggravated character, the Methodists remained true to their ideal of passiveness. They did indeed recur to the laws for protection ; after the most temperate remonstrance and offers of unanimous compromise (for Whitefield promised not to prosecute the Hampton rioters if they would only pay the doctor's bill of one victim and the glazier's bill of another) they appealed to the civil tribunal to decide whether outrages by which, as they truly said, not only Methodist security was threatened, were to continue. But never once do we hear of the Methodists taking the law into their own hands. They confronted clubs and stones, and language little less hurtful than these, with hymns and prayer, with meek submission and silence, which sometimes brought over their fiercest persecutors to their side. Where any opposite feeling manifested itself Wesley regarded the assaults as fitting rebuke : he applies this word to a blow from a stone by which one of his congregation was struck down after being only 'exceedingly angry' with the assailants. A power was manifested to the brutal and lawless savages, such as even they could understand.

Here surely we are called upon to trace the guidance of a wisdom more than human. We have seen with what recklessness of all truth the Methodists were represented as the authors of these riots ; how easily, with a shadow of evidence, they might have been made to suffer as criminals for those uproars in which they had first suffered as victims. Had they by the most temperate self-defence afforded their enemies any excuse for this misrepresentation ; had they ever struck one blow, under any provocation, against their

assailants, we can imagine how hopeless it would have been afterwards to attempt to distinguish between assailants and defenders. To the wise course by which they escaped this danger the Methodists were led by no spirit of policy, but by simple obedience to the words of Christ. 'Resist not evil' was the precept illuminated for them by that inward light which, falling in turn on so many different commands of Scripture, indicates to each man that which is meant for him. They erred in supposing that what was meant for them was meant for all, but there are few who can both persevere in a difficult duty and see that it is not universally binding.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CHURCH AGAINST THE METHODISTS.

IT has been seen how, from the time that Wesley set his foot on English soil after his sojourn in Georgia, the clergy were his strenuous opponents, and the dates of the first disturbances produced by his preaching have made it evident that this cause had nothing to do with their opposition. Wesley did not at once give up the attempt to keep his place as a minister of the Church. Sometimes his requests to be allowed the use of a pulpit were received with civility, and even gratitude, but we never, in the earlier stages of Methodism, find the attempt repeated ; any clergyman who admitted him made himself the mark of so much obloquy among his brethren, that either he himself was afraid to admit Wesley a second time or Wesley was too considerate to ask him. How far the most zealous of the body were prepared to go in their opposition has been seen in the Staffordshire riots, and might be still further illustrated by the accounts of tumults in Cornwall, which were also stirred up, as Wesley believed, by clergymen.

The hostility of the Church is perhaps still more impressively manifested by a letter which was addressed to the Fellows of Magdalen by a Mr. Graves,

in 1742, declaring that a paper which they had made it a condition of some necessary testimonial that he should sign, and by which he renounced the modern practice and principles of the people commonly called Methodists, was extorted from him by 'a sinful fear of man,' and was not to be considered binding upon him. This deliberate act on the part of a specially Church body is a clearer indication of the attitude taken by the clergy than any extravagances of individual clergymen; and we may take the particular instances of Methodist principles and practice which Mr. Graves was called upon to renounce as a fair account of what gave offence to the Church of that day,—viz. the habit of 'preaching in fields, of assembling together and expounding the Scripture in private houses, and elsewhere than in churches, in an irregular manner, and the pretensions to an extraordinary inspiration and inward feeling of the Holy Spirit.' Now to find fault with the Methodists for preaching in the fields, under the circumstances, was to find fault with them for preaching at all. 'To this day,' writes Wesley in his journal for 1772, 'field preaching is a cross to me;' and there is no reason to suspect any self-deception in the words. The irregular times and places of preaching which were the result of his expulsion from the pulpit cannot therefore be the cause of that expulsion, and we are reduced to this statement of Methodist principles as 'the pretensions to an extraordinary inspiration and inward feeling of the Holy Spirit,' as a sufficient cause why Wesley and those who thought with him should by the clergy of that day be considered heretics.

This is a conviction which will be strengthened by almost every word which was written by them against him. It is quite evident to any one who will give even a hasty glance at the pamphlets which were issued against the Methodists that what was offensive in them was their doctrine; and yet this fact is so strange (for their doctrine was simply that of the Thirty-nine Articles), that it is necessary here to give some specimens of the evidence which forces us to believe it.

It is somewhat surprising to find how early the Methodists had attracted attention. The first pamphlet published against them appeared as early as 1736, when the Wesleys were in Georgia, and Whitefield just beginning to preach to crowded congregations in London. It was a mere selection of extracts from seventeenth-century divines, drawn up by a 'lover of religion' as an antidote to the views of the new Oxford sect, and the passage which it quotes from Archbishop Sharp so exactly points out the point at issue between them and the Church of that day as to be worth quoting here. 'Some will take the term of Regeneration in a literal sense, though it ought to be understood figuratively, that is, we are not to imagine the word imports a new soul created in man by the Spirit of God, which is the literal sense; but only that the same mind which before was ignorant of and averse to the things of God is now enlightened, and doth more delight therein than before. Nor are those words "We are all dead in trespasses and sins, and that God by Christ hath quickened and created us again to good works," to be strictly understood, but only meta-

phorically. For here is neither a proper death, a proper quickening, nor a proper creation. . . . We should not therefore interpret such words in a literal sense, lest we entangle ourselves in as many difficulties as the Papists are in their doctrine of transubstantiation, by their construing literally those words, "This is my body."

Archbishop Sharp was a liberal and amiable Churchman, who had been a kind friend to Wesley's father, and deserves to be favourably remembered for having visited the wretched Jeffreys in prison. He had taken a judicious path between High and Low Church, as indeed is implied in his having attained the primacy; and though he died an old man in 1713, he may, as far as this extract goes, be taken as the spokesman of the Church of the eighteenth century. His words, then, form a fitting introduction to those of his younger brethren. Four Bishops, all extremely unlike each other, attacked the Methodists with more or less violence, and a notice of their opposition will form a sufficient sample of what this body of reformers had to undergo from their brethren.

Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London (1669-1748), the only one of these four Bishops with whom the Wesleys had any personal intercourse, is a typical prelate of the day. He exhibits all those characteristics of eighteenth-century theology which an attempt has been made to trace in a former chapter, and not much besides. His principal work was a codex of ecclesiastical law, a collection of obsolete enactments, a large number of which we may be quite certain were defied whenever anything happened to which they could apply;—one, for instance, being that any one neglect-



ing to come to church should forfeit £20 a month; and another, that any one striking with any weapon in the churchyard, even in his own defence, should have his ears cut off. Bishop Gibson was a great friend of Sir Robert Walpole, and was called his Pope, till an opposition to a measure called the Quakers' Tithe Bill offended the Minister, and lost him his chance of the primacy. He was a cautious, moderate, rather timid man, whose chief wish in all ecclesiastical matters was to keep things quiet. This sort of bishop was not very likely to get on with the Wesleys, and it is curious and yet natural that their first collision was occasioned by the High Church zeal of the two brothers. They called upon him in 1738, to set themselves right with him as to the accusations already spread against them. Dr. Gibson received them very civilly, made light of the accusations against them, and promised them access to him at all times. Charles Wesley, always the closest adherent of the Church, and indeed of every other person and thing of which the brothers were joint adherents, then proceeded to worry the Bishop about re-baptizing Dissenters. The Hanoverian Bishops were all Low Church men, and Dr. Gibson had no sympathy whatever with the Wesleys' baptismal zeal; the practice, he told them, was wholly irregular, being at variance with the wide tolerance of the Church, which recognized Dissenters' baptism. Charles, however, informed him that he should always consider it necessary to administer this rite wherever the Dissenters who were admitted to the Church desired it. Dr. Gibson did not want to make martyrs about Baptism, or anything else, and only got angry when,

after this distinct avowal of his opinion, Charles called to give him notice of his intention to perform this rite on a Baptist woman who wished for admission to the Church, and said, 'Sure and unsure were not the same.' The account of the first interview, after the baptismal subject was dismissed, is very characteristic of both parties. John, who had already begun to feel some difficulties as the head of a Society which wished neither to separate from nor be lost in the Church, asked the Bishop whether his reading in a religious society made it a conventicle. 'His lordship,' says Charles, 'warily referred us to the laws.' The laws, however, were not so distinct on this subject that all explanation was needless, as Gibson very well knew; and the brothers urged their question, whether the religious societies came under the scope of those laws which under the animus of the Restoration had been directed against all religious meetings unrecognized by the Church. It was a difficult question. The Societies had been strictly attached to the Church; but we have seen that almost at their first origin they had roused ecclesiastical jealousy, and of course, as Methodism proved, they furnished a soil for the development of any sect. To the question, 'Are the Societies conventicles?' therefore, the Bishop returned a timid answer. 'I think not,' said he; 'however, you can read the acts and laws as well as I. *I determine nothing,*'—words singularly symbolic of his position in face of the distinct and unhesitating spirit whose province it was to determine everything.

The favourable attitude towards the Methodists with which Bishop Gibson at first met them lasted but a

short time. During the ten years of life which remained to him after that interview they form the object of animadversions from his pen gradually increasing in severity, and are represented in his last utterances as foes no less serious to the welfare of the Church than the Deists and Papists with whom they are matched. They are mentioned first in a pastoral letter of August 1st, 1739, directed against the extremes of lukewarmness on one side and enthusiasm on the other. 'Both these mistakes,' his lordship informed his flock, 'being greatly prejudicial to religion and dangerous to the souls of men, I may well be justified, and specially at this time, in setting before you the great evil of each, and letting you see that Christianity lies in the middle way between them.' 'Enthusiasm, or a strong persuasion on the mind that they are guided in an extraordinary manner by immediate impulses and impressions of the Spirit of God,' was an error arising chiefly from 'the want of distinguishing aright between the ordinary and extraordinary operations of the Holy Spirit. The *extraordinary* operations were those by which the Apostles were enabled to work miracles, in testimony that their mission was from God. But these have long since ceased, and the ordinary gifts which still continue are conveyed in a different manner and for ends of a more private nature; and, however real and certain in themselves, are no otherwise discernible than by their fruits and effects, as they appear in the lives of Christians.' Of course, the Bishop went on to assert at some length, the Church taught regeneration. 'But it is one thing to pray *for* the Spirit, and another to pray *by* the Spirit.' The Spirit no doubt helps us in a general way;

'but that the Holy Ghost and our natural conceptions do respectively contribute to this or that thought or act in such a measure, this we dare not say.'

The Bishop went on to say, that he had at his first coming into his see charged his clergy not to preach mere morality, but to remind their parishioners 'that the main end of Christ's coming was to establish a new covenant with mankind, to show a new way of obtaining forgiveness of sins and eternal happiness. These (the several branches of what we may call the Mediatorial Scheme, with the several duties annexed to and resulting from each branch) are without doubt the main ingredients of the Gospel state.' The clergy, therefore, ought to 'avoid extremes, by ordering the choice of their subjects in such a manner' that the duties of mere morality on the one hand, and those which, in his peculiar and cumbrous metaphor, were 'annexed to and resulting from the several branches of the Mediatorial Scheme' on the other, might each come in for their due share of attention,—and such doctrine, he hoped at great length, was faithfully preached to his flock.

There was nothing in this pastoral letter that precluded the idea of reconciliation with the Methodists, but the next mention is much less moderate. Bishop Gibson, an old man when the Methodists arose, could no doubt remember the recollections of Puritan rule; and it was with that peculiar recoil due to such a tradition that he reminded his clergy, in a Charge for 1741, that a century ago 'the like clamours' (to those raised by the Methodists) 'were propagated throughout the nation against the established clergy as a body inactive in the work of religion, whose defects in the

discharge of their duty did greatly need to be supplied by itinerant teachers. And these, under a notion of more zeal and sanctity, and by pretences to more than ordinary measures of the Spirit, drew after them confused multitudes of the lower ranks, and did all that was in their power to bring the established service to disgrace. We can have no more pregnant testimony how mischievous such pretences are to religion, and how productive of profaneness, blasphemy, and the most evil doctrines and practices, than these and the like results.'

The hostile feeling in this Charge was about this time expressed yet more distinctly by Gibson, if, as was believed, he was the author of a short tract, entitled 'Observations upon the Conduct and Behaviour of a certain Sect usually distinguished by the name of Methodists,' the responsibility for which he accepted by ordering its publication, it having been handed about among the religious Societies with strict orders that no member should allow it to be seen elsewhere, some time before it appeared publicly. A marked change has by this time come over the tone of the controversy. The Methodists are no longer well-meaning Christians who are running into enthusiasm; they are audacious sectarists who have no right to remain in the Church. The key-note of anti-Puritan zeal is again struck. 'The unbounded licentiousness in holding assemblies for public worship, both as to persons and places, which had prevailed for some years before the Restoration, was a sufficient warning to the Legislature to have a watchful eye over that spirit which had caused so much confusion in the kingdom. And though at the Revolution the wisdom

of the nation, for some ease to scrupulous consciences in the exercise of religion, granted an exemption from the penalties of former laws, yet it is plain that they saw the mischievous consequences of granting that indulgence without such conditions and limitations as would be a security to the established government and religion against the advantages it might otherwise give to the enemies of both.'

The Act of Toleration, to which the Bishop here refers, became law in the year 1689, immediately after the accession of William and Mary, and its object was to relieve Protestant Nonconformists from the operation of the penal laws in force against them. It is cut off, by the preamble, from any possibility of being applied to other than Dissenters. 'Forasmuch as some ease to scrupulous consciences in the exercise of religion may be an effectual means to unite their Majesties' Protestant servants in interest and affection, it is enacted' that a number of penal statutes which are enumerated 'shall not be construed to extend to any *person dissenting from the Church of England* that shall take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and subscribe a declaration against Popery;' and wherever the intended objects of the Act are named or indicated we are reminded that they are all 'Dissenters from the Church of England.' The only way, then, that a preacher could exempt himself from the penal laws against Dissenters (whether he agreed with the Articles of the Church or not), was by taking the declarations here described, and the inevitable preliminary to doing this was to declare himself a Dissenter. Now the Methodists, not only refusing to call themselves Dissenters, but distinguish-

ing themselves by a special value for the sacrament which is made the test of Church membership, refused to take advantage of a protection which was only to be granted on this condition. For this obstinate clinging to the Church they are thus reproached by the Bishop. 'This new sect of Methodists have broken through all these provisions and restraints; neither regarding the penalties of the laws which stand in full force against them, nor embracing the protection which the Act of Toleration might give them in case they complied with the conditions of it. And if this be not an open defiance of Government, it is hard to say what is. They began with evening meetings at private houses,' the writer proceeded with growing indignation, 'but they have been going on from time to time to open and appoint public places of religious worship with the same freedom as if they were warranted by the Act of Toleration. And not content with that, they have had the boldness to preach in the fields and other open places, and by public advertisement to invite the *rabble* to be their hearers . . . But, notwithstanding such open inroads upon the national constitution, these teachers and their followers affect to be thought members of the national Church, and do accordingly join in communion with it,' though in an irregular manner, the writer went on to complain, for they came crowding to the Communion table in great numbers without sending in their names according to the Rubric, a practice which had fallen into very nearly the same disuse then that it is now. The first edition of this pamphlet proceeded to the extraordinary complaint that the Methodists thronged to the Communion in

such numbers that the clergyman had not time to dine before afternoon service! On revision, however, this charge seems to have struck the writer as possibly more damaging to the clergy than to the Methodists, for it was modified into the complaint about the Rubric, the far-fetched and trivial character of which betrays its true origin as an interpolation. This is the substance of the Bishop's pamphlet, the purport of which may be summed up in a single sentence—'You shall not be allowed to belong to the Church.' It was described in these words by a beneficed clergyman who came to the Bishop's assistance in the conflict—the Vicar of Battersea and Prebend of St. Paul's, Thomas Church. He distinctly describes the aim of the observations as (in his curious English) 'to *wish* the Methodists to withdraw from the Church entirely, and get their separate assemblies qualified as the law directs, and no longer appear under the garb of members of our Church. *This 'tis apprehended will be much better for us*, neither can I see any reason for them to complain of it. We cannot but look upon you' (addressing Whitefield) 'as our most inveterate and bitter enemy. Every prudent society must desire that they would withdraw from her bosom who by sheltering themselves in it can wound and sting her more effectually.'

The foregoing extracts may be thought somewhat long, but it is necessary to show the reader what that orthodoxy was which was scandalized at the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield. The Bishop was reproaching a band of missionaries who 'invited the rabble to be their hearers' *because* they refused in doing this to separate themselves from the Church.



Wesley was in many ways admirably fitted for a controversialist. He had a logical intellect and imperturbable temper. Like every man who has ever entered into controversy at all, he dwells too long on personal questions, and, like every man who entered into it at that day, he sometimes descends to mere railing, but this is very rare ; and on the whole his relevance, his candour, and his justice in argument might be taken as models by many men much his superior. But what is more surprising is that the attacks of which specimens have been given above drew from the hasty, illogical, impetuous Whitefield apologies which are, in the opinion of the present writer, almost models of controversy. The Bishop's pastoral letter reached him as he was on the point of embarkation for Georgia, and his answer accordingly was written in much haste, but Whitefield might have reviewed his letter at any time of his life, and found nothing in it to alter, for the touches of vanity and of bad taste which are all that a reader wishes to remove would not at any time have struck him as open to objection. 'Blessed be God that I can write with something of the love and meekness which becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ,' is one of the many utterances that an admirer of Whitefield wishes he had kept to himself ; and perhaps it was the most unfortunate result of his Calvinism that it encouraged this kind of vanity—any excellence in himself, as being a mere gift of God, seeming to him a proper object of remark to others. But, however unwise, it was not an untrue utterance. There is no violence, no exaggeration in his self-defence. 'That the Holy Spirit and our natural conceptions do respectively contribute to this or that

thought or action in such a measure or in such a degree,' the Bishop had said, and had justified his assertion by our mistranslation of John iii. 8, 'these are things we dare not say.' Surely every one who calls himself a Christian would now answer with Whitefield, 'Indeed, my Lord, I dare say them. For, if there be any such thing as a particular Providence, why may we not expect a particular direction from God's Spirit in particular cases? . . . Your Lordship says we dare not say this because our Saviour has told us that we know no more of the Spirit than we know of the wind; but do we not know as much? Cannot your Lordship feel the wind, then? Does not your Lordship know when it makes an impression upon your body? So easy is it for a spiritual man to know when the Holy Spirit makes an impression upon his soul. Your Lordship allows that the Holy Spirit does act in general, and why not in particular, actions? For can the one be without the other? Does it not frequently happen, my Lord, that the comfort and happiness of our whole lives depend on one particular action? And where then is the absurdity of saying that the Holy Spirit may, even in the minutest circumstances, direct and rule our hearts? I take it for granted that I am one of those men whom your Lordship thinks should be called upon for some reasonable evidence of a divine commission. . . . Did I not, when ordained deacon, affirm "that I was inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon me that office and ministration?" Did not my Lord of Gloucester, when he ordained me priest, say unto me, "Receive thou the Holy Ghost now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands?" And is not this,

steals no more, but works with his hands. He that has cursed or swore perhaps at every sentence has now learned to serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with reverence. These are demonstrable facts. I can name the men, with their several places of abode. One of them was an avowed atheist for several years, some were Jews, a considerable number were Papists, the greatest part of them as much strangers to the form as to the power of godliness. When you have weighed these things, I would earnestly recommend the following words to your deepest consideration: "Beware of false prophets:" "Ye shall know them by their fruits." "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

The controversy proceeds a step further, and in a second letter to Church Wesley indicates his attitude towards the Church of England with a distinctness and energy which makes us thankful to the feeble and malicious attack which had called it forth. This was the issue now raised between the parties. The Church, it was objected to him, had condemned extempore prayer: supposing she was wrong and he was right, he could not be her minister while he broke her rules. In the first place Wesley distinctly denied this consequence; he was ready to obey the governors of the Church in all things which were not opposed to the laws of a higher Governor; but whether he broke her rules or not, he insisted with a bold and politic challenge to his adversaries, he was her minister till he was formally deposed from being so. But which of her rules had he broken? When did he ever promise to use no other prayers than those provided in the Liturgy of the Church? When did he promise to

choose no other place for public worship than consecrated ground? 'Because the laws of the land do not forbid a man to teach my children,' Church had said, with exquisite logic, 'is he therefore empowered to seize upon an apartment in my house, and teach them whether I will or no?' 'An exact parallel indeed!' exclaims Wesley with well-deserved sarcasm. 'When therefore I came to live in St. Luke's parish, was it just the same thing as if I had seized an apartment in Dr. Buckley's house? Is the warning sinners in Moorfields to flee from the wrath to come exactly the same with directing the Doctor's family under his own roof?' Few logicians having such an argument as this to answer could have said so much, and no more.

Perhaps a still better specimen of temperate and dignified rebuke may be seen in the answer of Wesley to the Bishop of London's last Charge, written in 1747. If his citations from this Charge are correct (and the account is here given solely on their authority, the writer not having seen the Charge itself), the Bishop had proceeded, in the last few years, to a much more distinct position of hostility towards the Methodists; and a tone of indignation, which would hitherto have been out of place, mingles with Wesley's defence. He had said, in one of his letters to Church, that his reference to the Sacrament had been totally misrepresented. There was no preparation necessary, he had said, beyond a desire to receive whatever God chose to give, but he included in this desire a willingness to know and do the whole will of God. This had been before the Bishop of London when he made his Charge, and accused

Wesley of 'setting aside self-examination and repentance for sins past, and resolutions of living better for the time to come, as things no way necessary to make a worthy communicant. It was a strange assertion,' the Bishop had pursued in the same spirit, 'that we come to the Lord's table not to *give* Him anything, but to receive whatever He saw fit to give us, when, in the exhortation at the time of receiving, the people are told that they must give most humble and hearty thanks; and immediately after receiving, both minister and people join in offering and presenting *themselves* before God.' 'O God!' Wesley might well exclaim, in no affected horror, 'in what manner are the most sacred things here treated! What quibbling, what playing upon words is here! Not to *give* Him anything! Yes, to *give* Him thanks. O my Lord! are these the words of a Father of the Church?'

After answering several objections, of the greater part of which the above is a fair specimen, Wesley turns to the instructions which the Bishop gave the clergy of his diocese. 'How awful a thing is this! Here is an angel of the Church of Christ, one of the stars in God's right hand, calling together all the subordinate pastors, for whom he is to give an account to God, and directing them in the name of the Great Shepherd of the sheep, the First Begotten from the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth, how to make full proof of their ministry, that they may be free from the blood of all men; how to feed the flock of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood! To this end they are all assembled together. And what is the substance of all his

instructions? "Reverend brethren, I charge you all, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and warn, and arm, and fortify all mankind—against a people called Methodists."

'True it is, your Lordship gives them several advices, but it is all in order to that end. You direct them to inculcate the excellency of our Liturgy, as a wise, grave, and serious service, to show their people that a diligent attendance on their business is a serving of God, and to engage the esteem of their parishioners by a constant regularity of life. But all these your Lordship recommends, *eo nomine*, as means to that great end, "the arming and fortifying their people against the Moravians or Methodists, and their doctrines." Is it possible? Could your Lordship discern no other enemies of the Gospel of Christ? Are there no Papists, no Deists in the land? Or are their errors of less importance, or their numbers less considerable? Have they lost their zeal for making proselytes? Have the Methodists (so-called) monopolized all the sins, as well as errors, in the nation? Is Methodism the only spreading sin to be found within the Bills of Mortality? Oh, my Lord! if this engrosses their time and strength (as it must if they follow your Lordship's instructions), they will not give an account with joy either of themselves or of their flocks in that day!

'I must draw towards a conclusion. Your Lordship has without doubt had some success in opposing this doctrine. Very many have, by your Lordship's unwearied endeavours, been deterred from hearing at all, and have thereby probably lived and died in their sins. My Lord, the time is short; I am past the noon

of life, and your Lordship is old and full of days. It cannot be long before we shall both drop this house of earth, and stand naked before God. The Lord grant it may not be said in that hour, "These have perished in their iniquity, but their blood I require at thy hand."

The Bishop dropped his 'house of earth' very shortly after receiving this letter—his long life ended in the following year (1748). But before quitting Wesley's controversy with his Bishop, it is necessary to make one remark upon it. The strange disturbances which have been described in a former chapter, and which are sometimes represented as the reason why Wesley was not allowed to go on preaching in the churches, not only are not mentioned by the Bishop, but he seems hardly to have heard of them; at all events, he takes up a line of argument in which they would have played a part very awkward for him. It is surely very proper, he had written, 'that men should produce some evidence of a divine commission, when they represented themselves, as the Methodists did, to be under the direct guidance from God.' Now it is difficult to imagine any definition of miracles that would exclude the sudden and violent prostration produced upon Wesley's hearers by an invisible influence, that seemed not so much to touch the body through the mind as the mind through the body. The average creed of the day, that miracles were an interference with the order of nature, introduced for the purpose of establishing a new religion, exactly fitted these convulsions at Bristol. Here was what to all intents and purposes was a new religion to the man of that day—here too were all the results of physical force without

the employment of physical force. The representation, then, that the Methodists were cast out of the Church because they threw people into fits is so far from being true that it might almost be called the reverse of the truth. The pulpits of the day were refused them on grounds which their power to throw people into fits would, with logical thinkers, entirely invalidate.

The next Bishop who honoured the Methodists with his notice demands more summary mention. 'The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared' (1754) is hardly to be classed with the publications which represent the 'Church against the Methodists ;' Bishop Lavington, the anonymous author, deserves to be coupled with the men who flung dead cats and rotten eggs at the Methodists, not with those who assailed their tenets with arguments, or even serious rebuke. The vulgar prejudice of a similarity between Methodists and Roman Catholics, which was fading away at this time, was made use of to give a sting to every possible action, habit, or expression which could be proved common to both, the whole being flavoured with that spice of coarse buffoonery which would doubtless secure plenty of readers. It is constructed on a very simple plan : some extract is taken, generally from those extravagant passages in Wesley's or Whitefield's journal which lend themselves to such a purpose, and then follows a parallel quotation from the lives of the saints tending to identify the two instances of enthusiasm, which indeed in many instances was possible without any reflection on either. Take the following specimen : 'Another bait to catch admirers, and very common among enthu-



siasts, is a restless impatience and insatiable thirst of travelling and undertaking dangerous voyages for the conversion of infidels. Accordingly our itinerant Methodists are fond of expressing their zeal on this account. Mr. Whitefield says, "When letters came from Messrs. Wesley, their accounts fired my soul, and made me even long to go abroad for God too. The thoughts of it crowded continually upon me;" and then comes a parallel passage from Wesley. 'But all this only shows the natural unsettled humour, the rapid motion, of enthusiastic heads. And we may assure them that the zealous impatience of Popish fanatics are, by all accounts, greatly superior. "Oh, how many times have the nuns seen their sister of prayer drunk with zeal for the conversion of sinners and infidels, bemoaning herself that she was not a man to go abroad and gain erring souls!" The windmill is in all their heads. 'Tis almost incredible what miseries were endured by St. Francis, in his heroic voyage to convert the Sultan of Egypt, in that of St. Anthony to convert the Moors, and of St. Ignatius to convert the Turks.'

The above quotation will appear to most persons to have the aspect of an attack rather upon Christianity than upon Methodism. The following passage is a specimen (the worst, it is allowed) of the writer's courtesy. Whitefield had mentioned in the most general and abstract language, that his youth had not been free from vice; on which his opponent remarks: 'His first account of God's dealings with him is such a boyish, ludicrous, filthy, nasty, and shameless relation of himself, as quite defies paper, and is shocking to decency and modesty.' The conclusion of the book is far more shocking to decency and modesty

than any possible confession of Whitefield's. It consists of a long account of the Eleusinian Mysteries as they are explained by ecclesiastical writers, with all that physical symbolism so shocking to our notions of which, justly or unjustly, they were accused by the Fathers; and this painful picture is made relevant to the writer's purpose by being described as 'a strange system of heathen Methodism.' Such was the remedy offered by a Father of the Church to a corrupt age against the terrible danger of enthusiasm.

The only interest in this rambling and scurrilous production is that it is the first attack upon the Methodists in which we find the remarkable convulsions produced by Wesley's preaching noticed with anything of that fulness which we should expect. One explanation suggested by Lavington is that Wesley had drugged the *convulsionnaires*, but he does not shrink from the conclusion (which was totally alien to the dry commonplace sense of the Church in that day) that 'If there be anything in this mysterious part of Methodism exceeding the powers of nature, I see no reason against concluding that is the work of some evil spirit, a sort of magical operation or diabolical illusion.' This distinct acceptance of the Methodist disorder as possibly supernatural at once separates Dr. Lavington from his brother Bishops, as taking up an attitude which they could not have adopted without stultifying themselves. It is a curious test of the evidential value of miracles, that while on the one hand Wesley was assailed for not working them, on the other he should be reproached with encouraging magical operations and diabolical illusions.

my Lord, a reasonable evidence that I act by a divine commission? If this be not true, must not all those whom your Lordship ordains act only by a human commission? Nay, to use the words of Bishop Burnet in his pastoral letter, "Must not they who are ordained lie not only to man but to God, by saying they are inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit?" Does your Lordship ordain any without obliging them to give good proof that they have a special call from God? If ever you do, do you not lay your hands too suddenly upon men?'

If Bishop Gibson did not feel a momentary doubt, as he read these words, whether he or Whitefield were the real successor of the Apostles—and there is no sign that he did—it is a strong evidence of the wonderful capacity in the conscience of adapting itself to the practice of using words without meaning.

It has been said that Whitefield was at first the chief representative of the Methodist movement to the eyes of the outward world, and the Bishop had chosen his writings as the text of his attack on Methodism. Church's attack, however, brought Wesley into the field, and the following passages are taken from his letters written in answer to it, and entitled 'The Principles of a Methodist explained.' "Was not irreligion and vice already prevailing enough," he quotes his opponent as saying, "but must we throw snares in people's way, and root out the remains of piety and devotion in the weak and well-meaning?" Of whom speaketh the prophet thus?' he asks with just and temperate satire, 'of himself or of some other man? "Had the people gone on in a quiet and regular practice of

their duty, as most of them did before you deluded them?" Their duty! What duty? The duty of cursing and swearing, of gluttony and drunkenness, of whoredom and adultery, or of beating one another, and any that came in their way? In this not very quiet or regular practice did most of those go on before they heard us, who have now put off the old man with his deeds, and are holy in all manner of conversation. Let us bring this question into as narrow a compass as possible. Let us go no farther as to time than seven years past, as to place than London and the parts adjoining, as to persons than you and me, Thomas Church preaching one doctrine, John Wesley the other. Now then let us consider with meekness and fear what have been the consequences of each doctrine. I beseech you to consider in the secret of your heart how many sinners you have converted to God. By their fruits we shall know them. By this test let them be tried. How many outwardly and habitually wicked men have you brought to uniform habits of outward holiness? 'Tis an awful thought. Can you instance in a hundred? In fifty? In twenty? In ten? If not, take heed unto yourself and to your doctrine. It cannot be that both are right before God. Consider now (I would not speak, but I dare not refrain) what have been the consequences of even my preaching the other doctrine? By the fruits shall we know those of whom I speak, even the cloud of witnesses who at this hour experience the doctrine I preach to be the power of God unto salvation. The habitual drunkard that was is now temperate in all things. The whoremonger now flees fornication. He that stole

Wesley's answer to Bishop Lavington will not win from the reader the unqualified praise which we are able to bestow on a large proportion of his apologies. A mention in his journal, however, shows that this was not the result of any excessive feeling of resentment on his part. 'I was well pleased to partake of the Lord's Supper with my old opponent, Bishop Lavington,' he writes in his journal for August 29, 1762. 'Oh may we sit down together in the kingdom of our Father!'

Lavington's attack drew a letter from Whitefield, which exhibits in a striking light the superiority, in face of vulgar insolence, of a broad and liberal candour to that careful self-defence which, in its anxious justification of every detail, is almost certain to advance something disputable.

Whitefield does not begin his apology very happily. There is a testimonial to the wonderful powers of his own preaching from 'the great Colonel Gardiner' which certainly might have been spared; but the stream soon runs itself clear, and the following extracts give a fair specimen of the whole. 'You tell the world that, after the Methodists had traduced the clergy as long as they were permitted to do it in their own churches and pulpits, in order to reduce their flocks and collect a staring rabble, they set about this work of defamation in the fields. I was reading further expecting to find your parallel' (*i.e.* with the Papists), 'but I see it wanting. Are the Methodists originals in this particular? Or could you among all the histories of your eminent saints find no instances of St. Anthony, St. Francis, and St. Ignatius carrying on this work of defamation in their day. Will you suffer me to supply

that defect by laying before you some examples which, though of an earlier date, may by unprejudiced persons be esteemed as suitable as any of a popish extraction. In the New Testament (a book you seem to have laid aside, or at least little adverted to, when writing your pamphlet) we are informed that, when John the Baptist saw many of the Scribes and Pharisees come to his baptism, he said unto them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" The same book tells us that Stephen, being full of the Holy Ghost, and within a few moments of his death, said to the whole Jewish Sanhedrim, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in hearts and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." And our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Master of both these, in one chapter denounces no less than thirteen woes against the Pharisees and Sadducees, whose chief power of doing good and promoting the common salvation He well knew depended upon their character, as much as any clergy in any age of the Church whatsoever. Not that I would be understood to insinuate that all which the Methodist preachers have spoken against the clergy was spoken in the same spirit as our Lord, His harbinger, and His protomartyr spoke. That would be carrying the parallel much too far indeed. There is generally much, too much, severity in our first zeal; at least there was in mine: all I would therefore infer is this, that what you, sir, may term gall and bitterness and black art of calumny may be nothing but the honest testimony against the corruptions of a degenerate Church, and may without any degree of wickedness be supposed to come from the spirit and

power given them of God. If we deny this, not only Isaiah, Jeremiah, and almost all the prophets, but likewise Jesus Christ and His Apostles, must be looked upon by us, as I suppose they were by the men in whose day they lived, as great slanderers, and dealing much in the black art of calumny and defamation.'

The foregoing passage must be allowed to present us with that rare excellence—satire without virulence. The following affords an instance of one still rarer in controversy—honest and specific acknowledgment of error. Whitefield had, during his last absence in America, written a very unbecoming letter about Archbishop Tillotson, asserting that he knew no more of Christianity than Mahomet; and his friend Mr. Seward, who had since died, had sung pæans over the fall of the 'arch-deceiver.' It is to this utterance, which deservedly occasioned him a loss of his popularity, that he now refers.

'We condemned the state of Archbishop Tillotson when we ought only in a candid manner to have mentioned what we judged wrong in his doctrines. I do not justify it. I condemn myself most heartily, and ask pardon for it. But then do not you, sir, go on, to imitate us in our faults. Let the surviving Methodists answer for themselves; let Seward and Tillotson lie undisturbed.'

Here, too, occurs a passage which allows us to hope that the Methodist zeal against innocent recreation was not quite so strong as much of their teaching would lead us to suppose. His antagonist had advanced against the Methodists at least one well-founded reproach: their condemnation of all theatrical entertainment. 'If you can find time,'

replies Whitefield, 'from your other studies and duties of your calling to see and read such plays as the generality of ours are, I think you ought to lament it too.'

Again, he had been accused, with some justice at that time, of a fanatical eagerness for martyrdom, and Lavington had not failed to rake together every wild utterance of a similar import with which this instance of enthusiasm might be brought into company. Perhaps few men are able, in the face of an insulting attack, to avow and abjure this kind of folly with a spirit so clear and calm as that manifest in the following words :—

'Whatever can be produced out of my writings to prove that I have desired or prayed for ill-usage, persecution, martyrdom, death, &c., I retract it with all my heart, as proceeding from the overflowings of an irregular, though well-meant, zeal. However it might be with me formerly, I now find myself no ways disposed to say with Peter, "Though all men deny thee, yet will not I." Alas, alas! we know not what feathers we shall be, when tossed in the wind of temptation! Sufferings for the cause and cross of Christ will come fast enough of themselves, without our praying for them. But should the Methodists be called upon even to die for the cause in which they are embarked, as I am verily persuaded it is the cause of God, so I doubt not but suffering grace will be given for suffering times, and the Spirit of Christ and glory will rest upon the sufferers' souls. In the meanwhile, I thank you, sir, for pointing out to me a very wrong expression in the last part of my "Life." My words are these: "I could no



longer walk on foot as usual, but was constrained to go in a coach, to avoid the hosannas of the multitude." Your remark runs thus:—"Very profane, unless it be a false print for *huzzas*." I could wish it had been so, but the word was my own, and, though not intended to convey a profane idea, was very wrong and unguarded, and I desire may be buried in oblivion. A review of all this, together with my having dropped some too strong expressions concerning absolute reprobation, and more especially my mentioning Mr. Wesley's casting a lot on a private occasion, known only to him and me, have put me to great pain. It was wrong in me to publish a private transaction to the world, and very ill-judged to think the glory of God could be promoted by unnecessarily exposing my friends. For this I have asked both God and him pardon years ago. And though I believe both have forgiven me, yet I believe I shall never be able to forgive myself. As it was a public fault, I think it should be publicly acknowledged, and I thank a kind Providence for giving me this opportunity of doing it. My mistakes have been too many, and my blunders too frequent, to make me set up for infallibility. I came soon into the world; I have carried high sail while running through a whole torrent of popularity and contempt, and by this means have sometimes been in danger of over-setting. But many and frequent as my mistakes have been, or may be, as I have no part to act—if I know anything of my heart—but to promote God's glory and the good of souls, as soon as I am made aware of them they shall be publicly acknowledged and retracted.

We pass from the least to the most honourable of the Anti-Methodist prelates. Dr. George Horne, Bishop of Norwich (1789), partly from his amiable character and partly because he belonged to a time when Anti-Methodist zeal was past, was the most temperate of all Wesley's direct assailants. He was a learned and respectable writer, who is best known by his Commentary on the Psalms, a work which has been thought worth many editions, to the astonishment of the reader who prefers Hebrew poetry to tautological eighteenth-century prose, and does not find himself enlightened by being told that when the Psalmist says, 'Give ear, O my people,' 'he demands a large and attentive audience;' or that in declaring, 'We will not hide the praises of the Lord from our children,' 'the writer is desirous that the praises of Jehovah, an account of which had reached his own time, should be transmitted, through all the periods of Jewish economy, down to the later generation.' That sentence contains, what certainly the writer very little intended by it, a marvellous explanation of the popularity of Methodist preaching! Bishop Horne's works fill six volumes which few would read now, but they are not without some gleams of aspiration after an ideal foreign to that arid time, as indeed is manifest in the very sermon which contained his attack on the Methodists.

In 1761, having then, as Fellow of Magdalen, to preach before the University of Oxford, he took for his text a quotation from the Epistle of James, and for his object of attack the Antinomianism which he ascribed to the Methodists as their distinguishing tenet. He began by the expression of an unwilling-

ness to engage in controversy. 'But if men sleep when the tares are sown, 'twill cost them many waking hours to root them up;' and if controversy is to be entered on at all in the pulpit, that of St. Mary's offered a fitting occasion. He then notices the early origin of what he calls the Solifidian heresy, which, according to Augustine, had so early a date that the Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude, as well as that of James, were directed against it. This erroneous doctrine, he says, has been the principal ingredient in many heresies since, 'but it was in all its glory in the last century, and had taken possession of the theological chair in this University, when the incomparably learned Bishop Bull entered the lists against it, and gave it total defeat in his "*Harmonicæ Apostolicæ*." . . . But as heresies make their periodical revolutions in the Church, as comets in the heavens, and shed a baneful influence on all around, the time seems coming when Antinomianism is to be again rampant among us. And what is the wonder if, instead of having recourse to the Catholic doctors of the ancient Church, and such of our divines as have trodden in their steps, men will extract their theology from the latest and lowest of our sectaries? if, instead of drawing living water from the fresh springs of primitive antiquity, they take such as comes to them at second-hand from Geneva, and Clement and Ignatius pass for moderate divines compared to the new lights of the Tabernacle and the Foundry?'

It is a curious chance that the beautiful words of Taylor, which Horne goes on to quote, have a striking similarity to a passage in Wesley's 'Appeal to Men

of Reason and Religion.' 'That only is faith,' Taylor had said, 'which makes us to love God, to do His will and suffer His impositions, to trust His promises to see through a cloud, to overcome the world, to stand in the day of trial, and be comforted in all our sorrows.' That Horne had never read the tract in which Wesley had said so nearly the same thing, was not wonderful; but it is a specimen of the liberality then thought necessary by one of the most liberal of Anti-Methodists, that a man should be condemned from the pulpit by one who had not read his works. In wonderfully calm and gentle words does Wesley remonstrate against such treatment. 'Have you ever read the writings of those of whom you speak? If not, is it kind, is it just, to pass so severe a censure upon them? Had you only taken the trouble of reading one tract—the "Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion"—you would have seen that a great part of what you affirm is what I never denied.' It must have been with some weariness that the acute logician confronted this perennial distortion of a doctrine which was Luther's more than it was his, and showed the fallacy of the logic which could infer from the fact of our being 'set right by trust' that right deeds would not flow from a right condition. Yet, in the present instance, there is no shadow of irritation in his words. He is almost provokingly chary of reference to the article which condemned his opponents and justified himself. His references are almost invariably to the words of Scripture, which, as liable to different interpretations, could never supply the crushing confutation afforded by dogmatic statements drawn up in actual con-

templation of the difficulties in question. 'If, on speaking on this important point,' he concludes, '(such at least it appears to me,) I have said anything offensive, anything that implies the least degree of anger or disrespect, it was entirely foreign to my intention: nor indeed have I any provocation. I have no room to be angry at your maintaining what you believe to be the truth of the Gospel: even though I might wish you had omitted a few expressions—

“Which common frailty leaves, or want of care.”<sup>1</sup>

In the general, from all I have heard of you, I cannot but esteem you very highly in love. And that God may give us both “a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort,” is the prayer of your affectionate brother and servant.'

We may hope that on so good a man as Horne this magnanimity was not wasted. When Wesley sent thirty years later to request the use of the church at Norwich, and the incumbent asked the advice of his Bishop, Horne, who then filled that see, replied that there was no reason to refuse it him. Wesley survived the theological antagonism of the Bishops: that it was not succeeded by the hostile feeling of men who had provoked their enemies to unseemly reprisals, must be ascribed in no small degree to his own high ideal of the Christian brotherhood, not always of course fully carried out, but almost always remembered.

A more illustrious antagonist remains to be mentioned—the only one whose work against the Methodists, with all its virulence and injustice, has

<sup>1</sup> Horace, *Ars. Poet.* 351.

the interest of vigour and genius. Warburton is in many ways a typical man of the time. In him its rough turbulence, its outwardness, and its coarseness find their fullest illustration; nor is he without its more valuable qualities. There is, with all his coarseness of invective, a ring of manliness about what he writes that serves as the salt to keep it sweet; and if we must have such insolent abuse as that which flows from his pen, it is something to have it flavoured with wit. The student of the early Methodist polemics cannot but feel some gratitude for anything which is easy to read; and after the platitudes of Bishop Gibson and the railing of Bishop Lavington, the unfair and unworthy attack of Bishop Warburton at least has the merit of being forcible. It has some merits of a higher order, though for the present purpose it is not necessary to notice them. There are passages in Warburton's attack on Wesley indicating a much broader view than that attained by any other person mentioned in this chapter.

The work in which it occurs is a tract on a subject which Warburton, now (1762) Bishop of Gloucester was specially unfitted to deal with—the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit; and is directed, as the phraseology of the day would have phrased it, against the assaults of Infidelity on the one hand, and Enthusiasm on the other. The representatives of these two errors, like many others who were associated by being the objects of a similar attack, had so far justified their common assailant as to have turned their arms against each other. Wesley, at least, had made an assault upon Middleton for his book on the Miraculous Powers, not long before he was driven

to take up his pen against Warburton,—an assault which an admirer of Wesley will be anxious to consign to oblivion. Warburton handles his first opponent, however, with comparative gentleness; his venom is reserved for the fanatic. He begins with his own view of the case. The office of the Holy Spirit is twofold, to enlighten the understanding and to purify the will. The first of these was completed with the Canon of Scripture. Having enlightened the Apostles for the purpose of completing the New Testament, no more remained to be done. ‘And thus the promise of our blessed Master, that the Comforter should abide with us for ever, has been eminently fulfilled. For though, according to the promise, His ordinary influence occasionally assists the faithful of all ages, yet His constant abode and supreme illumination is in the sacred Scriptures of the New Testament.’ This belongs to the first division of the subject; but the Spirit has to be considered as the Rectifier of the will, no less than as the Enlightener of the understanding. This in the Apostolic age was miraculous,—conversions were then the direct result of the operation of grace; but on the perfect establishment of the Church these miraculous powers were to cease;—‘as well those which relieved corporal as spiritual distresses.’ The Bishop produces chapter and verse for his view of the matter. The basis of his argument is the thirteenth chapter of Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians. Few passages of Scripture, one imagines, have been the object of more frequent perusal than that description of Charity which has awakened so many hearts to the perception that, though the ills of life

are many, its remedy is one—that the Apostle was not speaking of things remote from the interests of every day, but of the one need which is common to humanity in his description of the love that beareth all things and is not easily provoked. If the censures passed on Hanoverian theology have appeared too sweeping, the reader is asked to read that chapter, and then the train of reasoning in which Warburton paraphrases Paul, and to remember that except the Methodists none of his contemporaries thought it monstrous. The words in which St. Paul contrasts the permanence of Divine love with the transitoriness of all its adjuncts and forms of manifestation, are analysed by Warburton as valuable evidence of the ‘cessation of the miraculous operations of the Holy Spirit after the establishment of the Christian faith,’ the more valuable because ‘this perhaps is the only express statement of it recorded in sacred Scripture.’ Where the Apostle declares a love in absolute confidence on which alone man is secure from error, the Bishop understands him to give warning that ‘the miraculous powers of the Church are to cease on its perfect establishment;’ and this meaning, which he establishes at great length, he carefully guards from the natural confusion, as he considers it, ‘that the superior duration of Charity takes in the consideration of another life.’<sup>1</sup> ‘Before the rule of faith was composed, some

<sup>1</sup> ‘But now, suppose the superior duration of Charity to take in the consideration of another life, the Apostle never could have said that Faith and Hope had the prerogative of remaining, or of having an equal abiding with Charity, when both Faith and Hope will be swallowed up in fruition.’—WARBURTON *On the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit*, book ii. ch. 2.



extraordinary infusion of the virtue of the Holy Spirit was still necessary, both to regulate the faith of him who received it, and to constitute the authority of him who was to communicate it. But when the rule of faith was perfected in an authentic collection of the Apostolic writings, part of this office was transferred upon the sacred canon, and *His enlightening grace was not to be expected in so abundant effusion. . . .* These reasons for a change of economy are sufficient to discredit the false confidence of modern fanatics, who pretend to as high degree of Divine communications as if no rule of faith was in being; or at least as if it needed the further assistance of the Holy Spirit to explain His own meaning.'

Having established his theory of Grace, he turns to the offender for whom its edge was sharpened, and seldom has one man brought more utterly untrue accusations against another than William Warburton against John Wesley. He was vindictive; he was cowardly; he was false; he invited persecution, and then fled before it, leaving his disciples to bear the brunt; he requited mere raillery with curses, and gave over to the devil those who interrupted his sermons by making a noise. The Mrs. Williamson story was raked up and pointed with insinuations which Warburton did not venture to put into plain language, though they were quite as true as the accusations with which they were associated, and no touch was wanting to complete the portrait of a wily and malignant hypocrite.

Wesley's answer, read apart from the attack which called it forth, would probably strike the reader (like

most analogous productions) with an eagerness to correct mistakes about himself somewhat out of proportion to the labours spent upon errors of greater importance ; he seems here, and elsewhere, to imagine that in vindicating his own consistency he is vindicating the truth. When we compare attack and defence, however, even this failing is thrown into the shade by the temperance which met such charges and such insinuations as Warburton's without bitterness and without a sneer.

Such was the reception given by the Fathers of the Church to those who in an evil day took up the cry of John the Baptist, and sought to carry to the lowest and most miserable of human beings the tidings of a Deliverer. That the new teachers never laid themselves open to blame by any extravagance is not asserted. But was disorderly zeal the enemy of the Church of that day ? Let the Methodists' most strenuous opponents answer that question. 'The decay of piety and religion, and the increase of sin and vice,' one of those opponents—Bishop Gibson, in his Charge for 1740—had said about the time of the rise of Methodism, 'are so visible in our days, notwithstanding the endeavours of the parochial clergy, that no additional expedients ought to be omitted to preserve among people a sense of duty and a spirit of devotion.' 'Is this a time to run any risk of the increase of vice?' asked another—the Rev. Thomas Church, in his sermon for the Charity Schools. 'Are not our streets already too grievously infested? Do we not every day see the dreadful confusions, the daring villanies, the dangers and mischiefs which arise from the want of sentiments of piety? For our own sakes and our posterity's, every-

*thing* should be encouraged which will contribute to suppressing these evils, and keep the poor from stealing, lying, drunkenness, cruelty, or taking God's name in vain. Surely while we feel our disease, 'tis madness to set aside *any* remedy which has power to check its fury.' The Bishop of London, interrogated on his oath, could hardly have denied that Methodism was 'an additional expedient' intended to 'preserve among people a sense of duty and a spirit of devotion,' according to the light of the preachers. The Vicar of Battersea, in like circumstances, must have been forced to confess that Methodism was a remedy which had been known to check the evils of drunkenness, cruelty, and taking God's name in vain. They at least, we should have thought, would have confined their opposition to the Methodists, to confutation of their errors of doctrine, and demonstration of their errors of practice; they would be anxious to retain within the Church an instrument which, with many disadvantages and imperfections, still coped with the grosser evils of the time. What was the fact? Mr. Church was the true spokesman of his brethren, when, in a world of heathens or semi-heathens, he told the Methodists, 'We cannot but regard *you* as our most dangerous enemies.'

The explanation, unfortunately, is a very easy one. The Methodist had to confront that hatred which is stirred by vigorous conviction in the face of languid make-believe. The Articles which every clergyman had signed, the Liturgy which he habitually read, had been emptied of meaning; he declared the Holy Ghost had called him to the office of a Deacon, and he meant only that he saw no reason why he

should not enter on it ; he prayed that he and his congregation might receive the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, and he meant only that they might go to heaven when they died ; he signed the Articles, which were drawn up to secure the doctrine of justification by faith, and he meant only that God would overlook the sins of those who acknowledged a certain historical person to be His Son. Hence, when a set of men arose, not only believing these doctrines with all their soul, but regarding them as the medicine for a diseased world, the clergy started back with horror. The Fathers of the Church felt that if their authority was what it pretended to be, they ought to be able to silence these men, whose utterances were a virtual attack upon their orthodoxy. The day was gone when this was possible, and the pamphlets which had to do the work of the gaol and the pillory were embittered by conscious impotence, and still more by the consciousness that the words of those formularies to which they were bound to appeal, seemed, at all events, directly against them.

Nothing therefore was less wonderful than the opposition excited by the Methodist preaching. That the Fathers of the English Church should confess themselves guilty of heresy, should admit that they had falsified the confession of faith they had undertaken to expound, and sit down at the feet of a few obscure plebeians to learn its true meaning, would have been the most extraordinary event in ecclesiastical history. The only alternative was angry and vehement disavowal. They could not venture to disregard a body of sectarists who seemed to have the formularies of the Church on their side ; they must

either accept them as their teachers, or pursue them without quarter. 'The worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched,' was become as much of an unreality to them as the ecclesiastical penalties which Bishop Gibson arranged in his ponderous Codex; and men who disturbed the sleepy ease of the Church to rouse those who ran no greater risk than this, were, in the words of her servants, pursued as her most bitter and dangerous enemies.'

## CHAPTER XIV.

### LAST YEARS OF WHITEFIELD.

THE separation between the two Methodist leaders, so far as it was of the nature of an estrangement, was of short duration. The intercourse was re-opened by Whitefield, who wrote a second time—October 10, 1741—on Wesley's taking no notice of his first letter, acknowledging that his ill-judged mention of the lot justified some hesitation in again entering into correspondence with him. 'Though much may be said for my doing it, yet I am sorry now that any such thing dropped from my pen, and I humbly ask pardon.' (This was before the public apology in the answer to Lavington, mentioned in the last chapter.) 'I find I love you as much as ever, and pray God, if it be His blessed will, that we may be all united together.' There is no mention of this letter in Wesley's journals, but about this time he speaks kindly of Whitefield's newly-married wife, and it is evident that from this time their intercourse was friendly, the cause of their difference being apparently not discussed between them again. Wesley's mention of his old friend is certainly somewhat cool; it seems, for instance, strange to publish a notice of a friend during his lifetime, saying that 'Even his

little improprieties of manner were a means of profiting many who would not have been touched by a more correct discourse' (January 28, 1746); or even to mention quite unnecessarily, 'I have sometimes thought Mr. Whitefield's action violent, but he is a mere post to Mr. So-and-so' (June 24, 1750); and the mention of his death gives no signs of any feeling whatever. But this sort of coolness had nothing to do with their quarrel; it was Wesley's nature towards every one. Five years after the last notice, Wesley writes (November 5, 1755): 'Mr. Whitefield called on me; disputings are now no more. We love one another, and join hand in hand to promote the cause of our common Master.' And this is the purport of all his notices of Whitefield during his later years. On some occasions he seems to have been thankful for the conciliatory influence of his old friend. 'God has repressed Mr. B——'s furious, bitter zeal, by means of Mr. Whitefield,' he writes on January 3rd, 1766; and a few weeks later, 'Bigotry cannot stand before him, but hides its head wherever he comes.' It is probable that during their late years of middle age, they came almost as near each other as if they had never quarrelled.

But there were many influences besides that quarrel, and the difference in which it originated, to separate them. Wesley always avoided fashionable people. Whitefield met with much notice from them, and evidently enjoyed it. They were thus occupied with the sections of society most exactly opposed to each other, for the *bourgeoisie*, among whom Wesley formed his societies, is much further off from the aristocracy than even a lower class.

Social position therefore, as well as difference of creed, was a separating influence between the two Methodist leaders, and perhaps it was a stronger one. Moreover, Whitefield belonged quite as much to America as to England. Thirteen times he crossed the Atlantic; the Orphan Home at Georgia was the nearest approach to a house which he had anywhere, and his English influence, consequently, was liable to long eclipse. It was, perhaps, fortunate that these circumstances allowed of so little intercourse between the two men after their reconciliation, though all that took place between them was perfectly friendly.

Whitefield remained, to the end of his life, the representative of the Methodist movement in the eyes of the polite world. Wesley, for instance, is only once mentioned in Walpole's letters; the allusions to Whitefield are not unfrequent. In tracing the stream of Methodism which found its way into high life, therefore, we find ourselves following his footsteps, and what remains to be said of his career finds its place by the side of such notice of more highborn Methodists as is needful to complete an outline of the whole movement.

Lady Huntingdon, the centre of this group, occupied a position of great eminence in both the religious and the fashionable world. Her husband, who died in 1746, leaving her a widow of 39, was the ninth Lord Huntingdon, representative of one of the oldest families in the kingdom; her son, who seceded violently from her religious views, was the Lord Huntingdon whom Lord Chesterfield called his adopted son, and recommended with a profusion of encomium to his Parisian friends. Her position in the eyes of the



non-religious world is indicated by a pleasantry of Hume's, who tells a friend that a meeting had been arranged between him and her for his conversion; and the extraordinary reverence with which she was regarded by her own co-religionists might be illustrated by many pages of flattery, not the less hurtful because it was sincere. In her position, therefore, dangers, almost equal to those which were not without their injurious influence on Wesley's character, were aggravated by circumstances peculiar to herself, and not opposed by that commanding strength of character which, in fitting a person for rule, to some extent shields him from the dangers of a ruler. There was a curious parallelism between 'Pope John and Pope Joan,' as the heads of the two divisions of Methodism were called by Berridge of Everton, a quaint, eccentric clergyman, who adhered strenuously to the Calvinists in spite of his impartial distribution of nicknames. If Wesley had his school at Kingswood, Lady Huntingdon had her college at Trevecca, in South Wales, where preachers for the various chapels supported by her received their education, and afterwards stood to her in something of the same relation as his preachers to him. She succeeded, though not without difficulty, in keeping the door of the Church ajar for some of her adherents, and several Methodists procured ordination through her influence. It seems a curious chance that this position should have been occupied by her and not by Wesley. As has been said, he was in some senses a High Churchman to the day of his death; while the indifference to Conformity or Dissent which was remarkable in her, forms her only title to the epithet

applied to her by her biographer, of 'the truly catholic Selina.' It is, however, a perfectly explicable fact; for whereas the Wesleyans were an Order, Lady Huntingdon's Connexion was a mere collection of congregations, only distinguished from their brethren by their peculiar attachment to the doctrine of the Articles. They had no coherency of their own, and were content to be absorbed in the Church of England whenever Anti-Methodist zeal should subside, when they did in fact form the ancestors of the Evangelical party of the present day. The Wesleyans, on the other hand, if accepted at all, must be recognized as a corporate body, with their own discipline and government.

The common characteristics of the first of these two parties were thus a Calvinistic creed and a good position in society, or at least a connection with some one who held it. The two tests, perhaps, were not so entirely unconnected as they appear. The pride of man is sometimes spoken of as an obstacle in the way of a creed which refuses to allow any part of the advantages we enjoy to be due to our own exertions; but as it is unquestionable matter of fact that most people greatly prefer the advantages which are due to their birth to those which are acquired by ever such meritorious exertions in this world, one does not see why this may not be equally the case as to the advantages they are to enjoy in another. The indignation with which any of the noble company who crowded Lady Huntingdon's rooms at Chelsea to hear Whitefield preach would have repudiated the suggestion that their Calvinism was a projection, on the vista of a future life, of their aristocratic associations, would,

no doubt, have been sincere enough. It is not those feelings which people recognize when they are put into words which have the most to do with their lives.

It is disagreeable, but not altogether surprising, to remember how often lively religious feeling has allied itself with an undue sense of social distinction, and it cannot be denied that some of the peculiarities of Methodism were likely to foster this feeling. A code which makes much of regulations about such matters as dress, is an elaborate preparation for an over-estimate of wealth and rank. It will be remembered how a newspaper of the day measured Whitefield's success by the plain dress of the ladies who went to hear him, and it is evident that this was a sign of reformation that could only be given by ladies and gentlemen. If it was a sin to wear ornaments, then those would be the most distinguished saints who possessed ornaments and did not wear them. With the poor a large part of the Christian code was compulsory; a Countess had shining opportunities, which were hopelessly beyond their reach. The tendency thus fostered to think much of the religion of people of quality was counteracted by others in the mind of Wesley, and few of the Wesleyans had any opportunity of indulging such a feeling; but it was very strong in the mind of Whitefield, and his warmest admirer would hardly deny it to be an unfortunate circumstance that he became Lady Huntingdon's chaplain. His letters to her are sometimes incredibly fulsome. 'Ever since your Ladyship's condescending letter,' he writes in 1743, 'my soul has been over-powered with His presence, who is all in all. When your Ladyship styled me your friend, I was amazed at

your condescension. But when I thought that Jesus was my friend, it quite overcame me, and made me to lie prostrate before Him, crying, "Why me, why me?"' The drawing-room of this noble lady at Chelsea was the scene of many dangerous triumphs for Whitefield, triumphs at which his enemies might well rejoice. Here, in one day, he tells a correspondent in a flutter of delight, his audience numbered Lord Bolingbroke and Lord Chesterfield, and repeats with naïve delight Chesterfield's frigid compliment, that he had 'discoursed well on the Divine attributes'—not very satisfactory praise from any but a nobleman. Bolingbroke, worn out by the vicissitude of a life of profligacy and intrigue, found perhaps a temporary entertainment in that excellent pulpit impersonation which we can easily believe to offer a new sensation to a jaded and disappointed man of the world; he 'was much moved,' and invited him to his house at Battersea, where the peer, Whitefield tells us, 'behaved with great candour and frankness.' Several of Chesterfield's family became his converts. His wife, a natural daughter of George the First's mistress; her sister, the Countess Delitz, and his sister, Lady Gertrude Hotham, are all brought in to swell the train of his illustrious adherents; but their distinguished relative, in spite of his compliment, is not thought a promising Methodist.

Whitefield's converts in the upper ranks were chiefly women, but they were numerous enough to form a conspicuous body in the polite world; and George II. rallied Lady Gertrude Hotham at court on the sober but costly attire, which he rightly estimated as 'Mr. Whitefield's choice.' Among the army, too,

'the new light,' as it was called by the lay world, made considerable progress, and is reflected in the Duke of Cumberland's *mot*, quoted by Horace Walpole rather for the rarity than the brilliancy of the specimen. On being informed by Colonel Grimley, a specimen of the military Methodist in high life, that a tree in Hyde Park had caught fire, his Royal Highness 'hoped it was not occasioned by the new light!' Such was the distinction of genteel Methodism in those days.

It is not easy to account for Whitefield's attraction for such men as Bolingbroke and Chesterfield; it certainly was not due to anything in the thoughts (if thoughts they can be called) which were to be found in his sermons, and we are driven to imagine it must have consisted wholly in the admirable impersonation in which the exorcised and anathematized spirit of the stage crept back into the pulpit. He hardly disguised from himself that he aimed at making the pulpit rival the stage. He quotes, with approbation, Betterton's answer to a Bishop who asked him why the clergy, who spoke of things real, affected the people so little; while the players, who spoke of things imaginary, affected them so much. 'We,' said Betterton, 'speak of things imaginary as though they were real, while the clergy speak of things real as though they were imaginary.'<sup>1</sup> This was the malady Whitefield aimed at curing, and in this attempt the player was his model. It is evident that a large number of his polite hearers must have gone to hear

<sup>1</sup> This is how Whitefield quotes it, but the epigram, which has been often repeated, was neater in its original form: 'You in the pulpit tell a story; we on the stage show facts.'

him preach as they went to hear Garrick act. Sometimes he would perform the Judge, and the performance is thus described by an auditor, Cornelius Winter, afterwards a well-known Dissenting minister :—‘ With his eyes full of tears, and his heart almost too big to admit of speech, he would say, after a momentary pause, “I am now going to put on my condemning cap. Sinner, I *must* do it! I must perform sentence!” Then, in a strain of tremendous eloquence, he would repeat our Lord’s words, “Depart, ye cursed,” and not without a very powerful description of the nature of that curse. But it was only by hearing him, and by beholding his attitude and tears, that a person could well conceive of the effect.’ We may take from a more illustrious spectator a description of his appearance as the Advocate.<sup>1</sup> David Hume, who says it was worth going twenty miles to hear Whitefield, describes it thus :— ‘Once, after a solemn pause, he thus addressed his audience : “The attendant angel is just about to leave the threshold of this sanctuary, and ascend to heaven. And shall he ascend, and not bear with him the news of one sinner, among all this multitude, redeemed from the error of his ways?” To give the greater effect to this exclamation, Whitefield stamped with his foot, lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, and cried aloud, “Stop, Gabriel, stop, ere you enter the sacred portals, and yet carry with you the news of one sinner converted to God!”’ Hume is evidently not intending to satirize or depreciate Whitefield; he is speaking of an

<sup>1</sup> It is given as here quoted in Philip’s ‘Life and Times of Whitefield;’ but the passage does not occur in Burton’s ‘Life and Correspondence of Hume,’ where Whitefield’s name is not mentioned. Hume was a pretty regular church-goer.

impression really forcible to those who underwent it. But who does not see that the whole of what was impressive in such a scene was contained in its being well acted? His words, as they stand, have no more pathos than the 'Mesopotamia' by the varied utterance of which Garrick said Whitefield could make men weep or tremble.

The copious floods of tears which he shed on these occasions were sometimes trying to his more fastidious friends. 'I hardly ever knew him go through a sermon without weeping more or less,' says the writer above mentioned, who also adds, 'I could hardly bear such unreserved use of tears.' So obviqus, indeed, was his fitness for the stage, that Quin, mortified at having to perform to comparatively empty benches at Covent Garden, while Garrick was drawing to the insignificant little theatre at Goodman's Fields a crowd which filled a train of carriages two miles long, revenged himself by calling his rival another Whitefield, whose heterodox attractions owed their charm to their novelty, and from whom the public would 'soon return to the Church.' Garrick responded (for the *mot* was thought worthy of preservation and repetition) that the doctrine preached by him was not a heresy, but a reform. Horace Walpole seems to have caught at least this aspect of his character. 'What will you lay that next winter he is not run after instead of Garrick?' he writes to George Montagu in 1748. When we consider how peculiarly a taste for theatrical representations is characteristic of the eighteenth century, how much the theatre was then the channel of that kind of amusement which we derive from the novel—when we reflect, too, that some of the

plays then popular were such as a person with very moderate pretences to 'seriousness' could hardly venture to admire, we shall attain some explanation of his popularity in the fashionable world.

His popularity was not confined to the fashionable world. Among his numerous friends was Benjamin Franklin, who pays the following tribute to his eloquence. When Whitefield was proposing to build his Orphan House, for which all the materials would have to be sent from Philadelphia at a large expense, Franklin, having in vain endeavoured to induce him to save this sum by changing the site to Philadelphia, refused to contribute to it. 'I happened soon afterwards,' says Franklin, 'to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. As he proceeded I began to soften, and concluded to give what *copper* I had in my pocket. Another stroke of oratory made me ashamed of that, and determined me to give my silver; and he finished so admirably that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all.' A member of the same congregation who had the same objection to contribute to the Orphan House, and in consequence had emptied his pockets before coming to church, to be safe from Whitefield's syren eloquence, was so much affected by it that he turned to a neighbour to borrow the money he had carefully put from him. 'The request,' says Franklin, was 'fortunately made to the only man in the company who had the firmness not to be affected by the preacher. His answer was, "At any other time, friend Hopkinson, I would lend to thee freely, but not now, for thee seems to be out of thy



right senses.”’ Whether Whitefield or his opponents were right about the site of the Orphan House, we may safely say that not one word had been uttered in the sermon which could change their opinion; yet here were these hard-headed, practical men, anxious, under the spell of words quite irrelevant to the purpose, to pour their money into a scheme they thought unwisely managed! No courtly words from Chesterfield, no expression of interest from Hume, implies half so great a tribute.

Whitefield's friendship with Franklin is not the least honourable passage in his biography; and it was not purchased by his friend at any sacrifice of sincerity. When Whitefield was coming to Philadelphia he wrote to Franklin in some uncertainty about a lodging, and Franklin responded with a hearty invitation. ‘If you make that kind offer for Christ's sake,’ said Whitefield, ‘you will not miss of a reward!’ ‘Don't let me be mistaken,’ said the honest American, with a bluntness refreshing after the formula; ‘it was not for Christ's sake, but for your own.’ It was a token of some kind of liberality in Whitefield that he could appreciate such a character. ‘He used to pray for my conversion,’ says Franklin, ‘but never had the satisfaction of believing that his prayers were heard. Ours was a mere civil friendship, sincere on both sides, and lasted to his death.’ This friendship is the occasion of an important testimony to Whitefield. During the violent excitement produced in America by the news of the passing of the Stamp Act, in 1765, and issuing in the War of Independence, a rumour was spread in Pennsylvania by Franklin's political enemies, that he approved of the Act. He was at

this time in England, and the result of his examination before the House of Lords, during the debate which led to a repeal of the Act, was such as fully to confute these calumnies. One account of this examination was written by Whitefield; and an American who expresses the greatest delight at this account is very anxious that it should go forth in Whitefield's own name. 'It would certainly put a stop to the malignant lies related of Dr. Franklin's conduct relative to the Stamp Act, and clear up his reputation before the American world. For who dares deny Mr. Whitefield's authority?' This is not the praise of an adherent.

Our most interesting account of the later years of Whitefield is derived from the writer already quoted, the Rev. Cornelius Winter, his follower, and earnest but discriminating admirer; and we derive a strong impression of an amiable character by hearing of the infirmities through which he was beloved. Winter was as a young man dependent on him; a relation which brought him into contact with much that was trying in Whitefield's nature. 'He used too much severity to young people, and required too much of them,' wrote Winter, 'and connected circumstances too humiliating with public service in a young man with whom he could take liberty; urging that it was necessary as a curb on the vanity of human nature.' He was at times exacting and irritable; he did not like being kept waiting for his dinner; 'a few minutes' delay,' we learn from the same authority, 'was considered a great fault.' But his faults were of that kind which inferiors easily put up with; there was never anything of haughtiness or

insolence in his dealings with them, and with him no one ever had to bear that chill weight which so many of the kindest persons lay unawares on their inferiors, of being condemned to hear only of what is amiss; he was as liberal of praise as of blame. His ingenuous readiness to confess himself in the wrong must also have tended greatly to smooth down any recollections of passing irritability. On one occasion, when some instance of this had grieved one who was anxious to please him, he burst into tears and exclaimed, 'I shall live to be a poor peevish old man, and every one will get tired of me.' Winter's narrative contains a testimony to Whitefield's preaching far more valuable than any aristocratic compliments. A cousin, whose ill-treatment had made Winter's youth miserable (a gilder to whom he had been apprenticed), hearing that he was turned preacher, came to the Tabernacle in Tottenham Court Road, out of curiosity to hear him. He heard Whitefield instead, and was so wrought upon by the sermon that he sought out the youth who had trembled at the sound of his foot upon the stairs, and who in his latest years sometimes woke in terror from dreams which brought back those hours of miserable subjection, lamented his cruelty, and implored pardon.

Perhaps the most engaging part of Whitefield's character is his unfeigned humility—a humility all the more striking from its contrast with the empty self-deprecation which formed a part of the religious phraseology of his school. After reading so much from his own pen, of his vileness and his worthlessness,—after learning that he is ready to sink into the earth to think how little he can 'do for Jesus,' it is refreshing to come upon such a passage as the

following. 'Alas ! alas !' he writes to a friend (Rev. Mr. S——) in 1748, 'in how many things have I judged and acted wrong. I have been too rash and hasty in giving characters, both of places and persons. Being fond of Scripture language, I have often used a style too apostolical, at the same time I have been too bitter in my zeal. Wild fire has been mixed with it, and I find that I frequently wrote and spoke in my own spirit, when I thought I was speaking and writing by the Spirit of God. I have likewise too much made inward impressions my rule of acting, and too soon and too explicitly published what had better have been kept in longer or told after my death. By these things I have given some wrong touches to God's ark, and hurt the blessed cause I would defend, and also stirred up needless opposition.' How much deeper a humility is expressed in this temperate confession of faults than in all his vehement self-accusations put together ! It is a useful lesson to discover that the same person may use both, for the first impulse of any reader is to believe that one who was so ready with the false humility had none of the true. Whitefield died in America in 1770. He was happy in the time of his death ; had his life been prolonged, he must have been the spectator of one conflict (the American War) in which his influence would have certainly been thrown into the scale of tyranny, and of another (the Calvinist controversy) in which it seems almost equally probable that he would have been dragged into association with strife as bitter and ignoble as that by which any religious body has ever been rent in twain.

## CHAPTER XV.

### FINAL BREACH WITH CALVINISM.

IN the year of Whitefield's death, a controversy broke out which finally divided the Methodist body into two hostile camps, and which may be taken as a landmark in the history of the revival, indicating the loss of its first vigorous youth, and its entrance on that stage of contraction in which a religious body splits itself up into sects.

This schism had been prepared by a course of gradual estrangement between the two parties, one of which looked to Wesley as their head, and the other to Lady Huntingdon. It has been said that Wesley avoided the society of people of station; he hardly ever mentions one of them without some half-contemptuous expression; he tries to dilute his discourse when he sees a well-dressed crowd, and fears after all it was too strong for them, or takes advantage of such an opportunity to mention 'the gross ignorance he had observed in the rich and genteel throughout the nation,' and the few occasions of intercourse with any of the upper classes are almost always recorded with some sign of reluctance. 'I dined with Lady ——' he writes on April 21, 1758. 'We need great grace to converse with great people, from which, therefore,

except in some rare instances, I am glad to be excused.' And shortly afterwards he writes: 'How unspeakable is the advantage in point of common sense which middling people have over the rich! There are so many unmeaning words and senseless customs among people of rank.' Again, in 1759: 'I spent an hour agreeably and profitably with Lady Gertrude Hotham (Chesterfield's sister) and Sir Charles Hotham. It is well a few of the rich and noble are called, but I should rejoice that it were done by the ministry of others.'

For Lady Huntingdon personally he had great respect and affection, but this tone of feeling could not but tell in his intercourse with one who was accustomed to such extreme deference from all who approached her. Moreover, some of the peculiarities of the phraseology used among the religious school she patronized was as offensive to him as it would be to most people who did not use it themselves. 'Do men gather from that amorous way of praying to Christ, or that luscious way of preaching His righteousness, any real holiness?' he asked a friend, on March 20th, 1768; and from the passage immediately following it is evident that he connected this dialect with their Calvinism. 'Do you not observe that all the lay preachers who are engaged with me are maintainers of general redemption? and it is undeniable that they are instrumental in saving souls. God is with them and He works by them, and has done so for near this thirty years.' It is not easy to see why any opinion about Predestination should be connected with what Wesley not unjustly calls an amorous tone of familiarity with a sacred name, but this certainly

was a correct description of the dialect of Lady Huntingdon's followers. We might imagine from her phraseology that 'the cause of Christ' was the cause of some suffering exile who might by her patronage be restored to his just rights. Some of her contemporaries may have talked of Charles Edward Stuart as she talked of Christ.

The correspondent to whom Wesley addressed these remarks was Jean Guillaume de la Flechère, better known as Fletcher of Madeley, and a person of importance in the history of Methodism. He made the impression of great saintliness on some of the most opposite persons with whom he came in contact, one being a Frenchman of the school of Voltaire, who was, we are told, confuted by him in argument, and another a Catholic peasant in the Cevennes mountains, who at first refused to admit him on account of the poverty of his appearance. He was by birth a Genevese, but the Calvinistic creed of which he was so strong an opponent was a necessary condition of entering the ministry at Geneva, and after a life of wandering and a curious attempt to become a soldier of fortune he came to England, and in 1759 accepted, in preference to another of double its value, the living of Madeley in Shropshire, he being one of the few Methodists who obtained ordination. He acted as a kind of curate to Charles Wesley before entering on this regular duty, and was in close intercourse with both the brothers from the time of his first acquaintance with them. 'How wonderful are the ways of God!' writes Wesley in his journal for the 20th of March, 1757. 'When my bodily strength failed, and none in England were able and willing to assist me, He

sent me help from the mountains of Switzerland, and a help meet for me in every respect. Where could I have found such another?' And he afterwards often occupied his pulpit at Madeley, when sometimes the windows had to be taken down that those of the congregation who could not get seats in the crowded church might hear in the churchyard. Fletcher's address to his spiritual guides was sometimes not less fulsome than Whitefield's to his patroness. 'Is it possible,' he writes to Charles Wesley in 1757, 'that such a sinful worm as I should have the privilege to converse with one whose soul is sprinkled with the blood of my Lord? The thought amazes, confounds me, and fills my eyes with tears of humble joy. Judge then at what a distance I must see myself from you if I am so much below the least of your children, and whether a remembrance within suffices to make me presume to write to you, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.' To Whitefield he writes in equally abject terms. 'I am confounded,' he tells him in 1767, 'when I receive a letter from you. Present and eternal contempt from Christ and all His members is what I deserve. . . Your mentioning my poor ministrations among your congregation opens a wound of shame that was but half healed. I feel the need of asking God, you, and your hearers, pardon for weakening the glorious matter of the Gospel,' &c. &c. On the other hand, he treated his blood relations with great coldness, and satisfied himself for refusing the entreaties of his widowed mother to pay her a visit, with the reflection that in yielding to them he should 'lose precious time, and incur expense;' and though Charles Wesley, to whom he wrote this, and who was now himself a father, gently



pleaded the rights of a parent, it does not seem that Fletcher acted upon his words. This is the only instance of Methodism acting as a dividing influence between parent and child which comes before us in tracing the influence of Wesley.

Fletcher's life at Madeley, however, was altogether admirable. It was among a set of rough boors that he, a refined and accomplished gentleman, took up his life-long abode, and spent in the attempt to reclaim them from a life lower than that of the brutes, his fortune, his time, and his health. In this attempt he had to confront very nearly all the opposition to which bigotry had, twenty years before, animated brutal ferocity against the Wesleys and Whitefield, together with a certain kind from which they, continually moving from place to place, were free. Many a soldier who would have died bravely on the battlefield, would have shrunk from invading the fairs and wakes where the gentle Swiss broke in alone and undefended, to rebuke the drunkenness and obscenity of such meetings, together, no doubt, with much that was harmless enough. On one occasion the delay caused by an unexpected burial saved him from rougher treatment than any Wesley had ever to experience. A mob of drunken colliers, having whetted their cruelty in baiting a bull, were about to satisfy it in 'baiting the parson,' and the *dramatis personæ* were even agreed upon the parts of those who should pull him from his horse, and those who should set the dogs upon him, when, during the delay occasioned by the burial, the bull broke loose and forced the crowd to fly for their lives. And an instance is mentioned by his biographer, of one who, 'having treated this venerable

pastor with ridicule and abuse at one of these riotous assemblies, was shortly afterwards constrained to cast himself at his feet and solicit his prayers.' And he proceeds from his own knowledge to testify to the changed life of the convert—a testimony of more value where the life abandoned is outwardly vicious than can be rightly estimated by those accustomed to the associations of respectability.

In many ways Fletcher was especially suited to form a bond between contending parties. He forms the link between Methodism and the Church, and for a time he acted the same part between the divergent sections of Methodism itself. Whilst he was still to Wesley in the capacity of a spiritual son, he had accepted under the Countess, without any stipend, the somewhat arduous post of visitor to her college; and it cannot be denied that he was ready to address his patroness in that subservient tone she seems to have unconsciously demanded. Perhaps it was from a perception of this tendency in him that Wesley wrote the letter which has been quoted above; it must certainly have been this or some similar expression from Wesley to which Lady Huntingdon refers in the following letter to a friend:—'You will not be surprised to hear that dear Mr. Fletcher has been severely reprimanded for endeavouring to maintain peace and unanimity in the household of God. His preaching so frequently for me and dear Mr. Whitefield, and mixing so much with those who have been sneeringly and contemptuously called "the genteel Methodists," are considered great offences. The hearers of Mr. Madan and others are no better than wordlings, and all who hold the free grace truths of the

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Gospel are pronounced unprofitable, conformed to this world,' &c.

While so much difference of feeling had sprung up on personal grounds, the principle which was at issue between them was, by the force of circumstances, brought into a distinctness which made it thenceforward a line of division between two hostile parties. In the year 1770, when this controversy broke out, persecution was at an end; field preachers were (with few exceptions) no longer a mark for stones and rotten eggs; and those intellectual missiles, sometimes as hard as the first, sometimes as unsavoury as the last, with which their reverend adversaries had greeted the Methodists, ceased to issue from the press or to be discharged from the pulpit. The result was what no doubt all established religions have exhibited under like circumstances. While individual conviction was the sole basis of Methodism, the Methodists were a picked body of deeply religious persons; after the lapse of a generation such members did not form a larger proportion of this sect than of any other, and this inevitable deterioration is more obviously disastrous among those whose bond of union is a common discipline than among those with whom it is a common creed. Moreover, Wesley's personal influence had its peculiar dangers; his insistence on the duty of self-denial concealed from himself and others that he weakened all those powers which we need for self-restraint. His own temptations were those of a cold temperament, and he never considered any other. His characteristic word of approval is 'lively:' a congregation in a satisfactory state is a 'lively' congregation; and if people shed tears, or groaned, or fell down on the floor

under the influence of his exhortations, he took it as a proof that 'the work of grace' was going on in their souls. Very often, no doubt, it was so; but there must have been some occasions when he was deceived as to the feeling being even real, and many when it was a delusion to think it of the slightest value. The most lamentable instance of this kind of mistake is in his evident effort to throw all children into religious agitation. He quotes with evident pleasure the speech of a little girl with whose grandmother he was praying: 'Oh, grandmama, have you no sins to cry for as well as me!' (July 1771.) He takes it as 'a token for good' when some children to whom he is talking 'are cut to the heart and seem much affected' (May 1770), and is greatly delighted when one poor little girl 'heaved and strove for some time, and at last was constrained to yield and break out into strong cries and tears.' It is impossible to read without regret almost every word he writes about his school at Kingswood, so certain is it that the moral atmosphere in which he kept the children there must have done many of them irreparable harm. 'About this time,' he writes in April 1768, 'a remarkable work of God broke out among the children at Kingswood School:' and then gives the following account from one of the masters. 'On Wednesday, the 20th, God broke in among our boys in a surprising manner. . . We have no need to exhort them to pray, for the Spirit runs through the whole house. While I am writing, the cries of the boys from their several apartments are sounding in my ears. They are come to this, "Lord, I cannot, I will not rest without Thy love." The age of those who have been set at liberty is from eight to fourteen.' Two years

later the same master succeeded in bringing on this violent agitation again, and the poor children were thrown, by his exhortation 'never to rest until they found peace with God,' into a condition which made sleep impossible for one whole night, and caused him to be awakened early with the violent cries and prayers, which seem to have lasted without intermission for about ten hours. Exactly a year afterwards Wesley wrote these words in his journal:— 'I spent an hour among our children at Kingswood. It is strange! How long shall we be constrained to weave a Penelope's web? What is become of the work of grace which God wrought in them last September? It is gone! It is lost! It is vanished away! There is scarce any trace of it remaining.' How strange would it appear to most of us that any result should remain from this hysterical effusion, except such as we should wish away.

It is not too much, then, to say that Wesley made emotion an invariable test of the heart being right with God. He records expressions of this in his published journal, so that of course anybody who chose might make him or herself the hero or heroine of a little religious romance. After recording in his journal for Jan. 6, 1763, the history of one woman who seems to have done so, he goes on, apparently in reference to past experience: 'Now suppose some time hence she should be cold, or dead, shall I say she deceived herself? Not at all; I will rather say she was unfaithful to the grace of God. Therefore that way which has now become common, of "staying to see whether the gift be really given," and which many take to be exceeding wise, I take to be exceeding foolish.

If a man says "I now love God," and I know him to be an honest man, I believe him. Why then should I stay?'

The influence of one who encourages emotion, and will not test it by its result on the outward life, cannot be unmingled for good; no one can foster it in one part of the nature and shut it out of all the rest. Such an atmosphere as is here described could not brace the soul to resist strong temptation. The remarkable thing indeed was, that under influence such as this, and the privation of all recreation and diversion, self-indulgence should so seldom take its most evil form. About the year 1770, however, Fletcher of Madeley writes that 'Antinomian principles and practice spread like wildfire in some of his societies; and he goes on to give a glaring instance of these practices in one who 'professed to be in a state of sanctification and despised his brethren as legalists, in which the seducer was a married man.

It is rare that any one can rightly estimate his own influence. Wesley never noted tendencies; he could follow only a logical train of thought, and looked accordingly upon the evil deeds of his followers as resulting from a distortion of the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Hence the remedy which suggested itself was not a code relaxed against diversion and strengthened against other kinds of self-indulgence, but a more rigid and distinct definition of this doctrine.

When the ministers met at Bristol for their twenty-seventh Conference, accordingly, in August 1770 Wesley set himself to guard against the Calvinism which he believed to lie at the root of these evils.

From the very first meeting of Conference, indeed, this anxiety had been distinctly expressed. Now, however, he returned to the warning then given; and the Minutes of Conference for this year, destined to be the foundation of such fierce debate, contain his deliberate Confession of Faith on this oldest of all theological controversy. 'Our Lord himself taught us to use the expression "man's faithfulness," and we ought never to be ashamed of it. We ought steadily to assert, on his authority, that if a man is not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, neither will God give him the true riches. We have received it as a maxim,' the Confession proceeds, 'that a man is to do nothing *in order* to justification. Nothing can be more false. Whoever desires to find favour with God should cease to do evil, and learn to do well. Whoever repents should do works meet for repentance. And if this is not in order to find favour, what does he do them for?' 'Who is accepted among those who never heard of Christ? He that feareth God, and worketh righteousness according to the light he has. Is this the same with he that is sincere? Nearly, if not quite. Is not their salvation by works? Not by the merit of works, but by works as a condition. What have we, then, been disputing about, these thirty years? I am afraid, about words. As to merit itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid, we are rewarded according to our works, yea, because of our works. How does this differ from for the sake of our works? Can you split this hair? I doubt I cannot.'

The Methodists were still, in the estimation of the world, one body. The Order instituted by John

Wesley, the preachers who were known as Lady Huntingdon's Connexion, and the clergymen of the Church of England who sympathised with the aims of both these parties (of which by this time there were many), had still enough in common to assume, from the distance of the average Christianity of that day, a coherent unity. But this could not survive such a declaration as that of the Minutes. If they had contained a string of the most unquestionable propositions which could be drawn up, the confession with which they begin, 'We have leaned too much towards Calvinism,' must have caused deadly offence among all followers of Whitefield. From their first appearance, accordingly, Lady Huntingdon declared that whoever would not join in protest against them should quit her college at Trevecca; and the Superintendent, Joseph Benson, refusing to disavow the doctrines of the Minutes, was dismissed. On hearing of this event, Fletcher wrote to both parties concerned in it, encouraging the servant and blaming the mistress. 'If a master is discarded for believing that Christ died for all,' he concludes his letter to Lady Huntingdon, in his florid style, 'then prejudice reigns, charity is cruelly wounded, and party spirit shouts, prevails, and triumphs;' and intimated that her new test would exclude him from her service. All that came from him, however, was full of gentleness; and when he went to Trevecca shortly after the dismissal of Benson, though the visit proved final, the result was for the time conciliatory.

Soon afterwards Lady Huntingdon wrote to Wesley, asking for an explanation of the Minutes, and received no answer. Their last intercourse had



not been altogether pleasing. Some time in the autumn of 1770, after the expulsion of the Arminians from Trevecca, he had sent Lady Huntingdon one of his outspoken rebukes, which is omitted in her biography. There was, however, so much monotony in Wesley's utterances of this nature, that we have no difficulty, from the frequent similar letters in his journal, in imagining the sermon to which her Ladyship was forced to listen, and which no doubt was very unlike anything she had to hear from other quarters. A letter written by Wesley about her, just at this time, shows plainly how much of the spirit he blamed in her lurked in his own heart. 'There is no great fear that I should be prejudiced against one I have known intimately for these thirty years. And I know what is in man, therefore I make large allowances for human weakness. But what you say is exactly the case, they *are* jealous of their authority. Truly there is no cause:

"Their thoughts and words are far apart from mine." <sup>1</sup>

I fear and shun, not desire authority of any kind; only when God lays it upon me I bear it for His and the people's sake.' The arrogance of this letter must have given a very rough edge to rebuke. Nor is that feeling less evident in other letters which he wrote at the same time respecting her. 'For several years,' he says to one correspondent, 'I had been deeply convinced that I had not done my duty with regard to that valuable woman, that I had not told her what I was convinced no one else would dare to do, and what I knew she would bear from no other person, but

<sup>1</sup> Hor. Sat. I. VI. 92.

possibly might hear from me. But being unwilling to give her pain, I put it off from time to time. At length I did not dare to delay any longer, lest death should call one of us home, so I at once delivered my own soul, by telling her all that was in my heart. It was my proper business so to do, as no one else could or would do it. Neither did I take at all too much upon me. I know the office of a Christian minister. If she has not profited, it is her own fault, not mine. I do not know that there was one charge in that letter that was unjust, unimportant, or exaggerated.' Again, some time after sending the letter: 'I have this morning calmly and coolly read over' (a copy of) 'my letter to Lady Huntingdon. I still believe every line of it is true, and I am assured I spoke the truth in love.' Lady Huntingdon appears to have been of a different opinion. No direct account is given of the way in which she took Wesley's rebuke, but it is evident that it did not mend matters, and a rebuke which does not mend matters must tend still more to mar them. Charles Wesley wrote the Countess three letters between October and December of this year, which, it is provoking to find, are described only, and not given, in her biography; distinctly separating himself from his brother in this dissension, and taking up a tone of apology which shows that she was deeply offended; and in this frame of mind her demand for explanation was written.

Early in 1771, Lady Huntingdon took a step which put her more decidedly in the wrong. The Wesleyan Conference was this year to meet at Bristol, and some time before August, which was to be the time

of meeting, she sent about a circular inviting the clergy of all denominations to assemble at Bristol, and either force the Conference to recant its heresy, or sign a Declaration which was enclosed with the circular. It would fill two or three pages of this volume, and contains little more than a shrill and vehement assertion that the Minutes were a grievous heresy, and that neither as members of the Church of England nor as so-called Methodists could the protesting parties allow them to go forth uncontradicted.

The protest was quite superfluous. Beyond the name of Methodists (which, as applied to the whole body of what we should now call Evangelical preachers, was as singularly inappropriate as it was appropriate when applied to Wesley's Society) and the ties of friendship, Lady Huntingdon had nothing to do with Wesley. There was a certain absurdity in this acceptance of a fortieth Article at the bidding of a narrow-minded woman, and so it seems to have been generally felt, for before the time fixed for the double conference it was manifest that the protestant assembly would be a failure. The trustees of Whitefield's chapels, among others, refused to take part in it—a refusal for which the Countess reproached them, in her peculiar English, with 'a want of disinterestedness for that truth contended for'—and thus says, though assuredly she does not mean, that they are guilty of an excessive interest on her own side. She perceived, however, that she had made a mistake. More correspondence had taken place on the subject between her and Wesley in the interval between the issue of her circular and the meeting of Conference, and in what is given in his last letter to her there is

nothing of the spirit of arrogance which was evidently so offensive in his former letters. It is remarkable as the only published letter in which Wesley betrays any consciousness of his own temptations, though even here he can discern the Past in only a tendency which never left him while he sojourned on this earth. 'Once,' he tells his correspondent, 'I thought myself almost infallible, but I bless God I know myself better now. . . . You have one of the first places in my esteem and affection, and you once had some regard for me. But it cannot continue if it depends on my seeing with your eyes, or being in no mistake. What if I were in as many errors as Mr. Law himself? If you were, I should love you still, provided your heart was still right with God. My dear friend, you seem not well to have learnt the meaning of those words, which I desire to have continually written upon my heart: "*Whoever* doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

'I am my dear Lady, your affectionate

'JOHN WESLEY.'

Whether moved by this letter or by the prospect of a complete collapse for the proposed manifesto, Lady Huntingdon wrote to Wesley immediately before the opening of Conference in a conciliatory and even apologetic tone. 'As Christians,' she said, 'we wish to retract what a more deliberate consideration might have prevented;' and her cousin and spokesman, the Hon. and Rev. Walter Shirley, who had drawn up the Declaration, made a still more explicit confession of error. 'It must be acknowledged,' he allowed, 'that the circular was too hastily drawn up and im-

properly expressed, and therefore for the offensive expressions in it we desire we may be hereby understood to make every suitable submission to you, sir, and the gentlemen of the Conference.' Then, as is so often the case with apologists, he concluded with words that undid the effect of all that had gone before: 'And I cannot but wish most earnestly that the recantation of this circular letter may prevail as an example for the recantation of the Minutes.'

If the apology had been ever so complete and satisfactory, it was a somewhat unfortunate circumstance that it should only have been made as the Huntingdon party discovered their numerical weakness. The Wesleyan Conference was unusually large. On August 6, 1771, fifty-five preachers had come together to oppose the formidable body which was to take towards them the attitude of an Inquisition—which formidable body, it was found, consisted of only eight persons, Shirley being the only member in whom the most partial observer could see any pretensions to eminence. Wesley sent no answer either to his letter or to Lady Huntingdon's, both of which reached him just at the opening of the Conference. In answer to a second letter from Shirley, he appointed Thursday, the third day of the session, for receiving him and his associates; thus deferring the visit which had been announced with so much authority, to the discussion of his own affairs. On Thursday, August 8th, the eight Calvinists were admitted, and must have had rather a mortifying interview. It was, however, an entirely conciliatory one, and Shirley, who acted throughout as the spokesman of Lady Huntingdon, and whose behaviour on the occasion is the subject of

Fletcher's profuse eulogium, declared on quitting the assembly, that it was one of the happiest and most honourable days of his life.' The result which had given him this satisfaction was the signature by Wesley and his preachers of a document drawn up by himself, asserting that 'we the Rev. John Wesley, &c. 'did not intend in the Minutes of 1770 to favour the perilous and abominable doctrine of justification by works.' It seems not very easy to reconcile this language with that used at the Conference of 1770 and quoted above, but Wesley must have strained his logic to effect this, for we cannot doubt his honesty. It is not to be wondered at, however, that some misunderstanding resulted from this attempt at compromise, and Wesley was much blamed for sending to the press a pamphlet written by Fletcher, and sent to him to publish or suppress at his discretion, afterwards called 'The First Check to Antinomianism.' This occasioned the publication on the other side of a narrative of the proceedings at the Conference, drawn up by Shirley, in which Fletcher, as was to be expected, discovered some 'important mistakes,' which a second explanation from his pen was needed to correct. This second explanation was in its turn the object of attack and the seed of further discussion.

Thus originated a controversy which, though it for several years divided the Evangelical body into hostile camps, and when the din of warfare was past left them remote and estranged, need not be followed out in any detail. After following the misfit of objection and reply; after tracing the diffuse and triumphant refutation of difficulties which do not exist, and the equally diffuse and triumphant exposition of

difficulties which are not refuted ; after watching the strife grow gradually more personal and more trivial, till the gentle remonstrance, mindful of old ties and common aims, has risen into fierce railing which no reconciliation can follow, we should not gain one idea which is not obvious on the most superficial contemplation of the subject at issue. But the controversy was not unimportant in its bearing on the development of doctrinal theology, and a specimen of the writings of each side may illustrate the character of the movement we are endeavouring to trace. Wesley took little direct share in the argument, and his allusions to it are such as an admirer of his must be anxious to forget. The most popular contributions to this war of pamphlets and treatises, on the Wesleyan side, were Fletcher's Checks to Antinomianism. Their popularity was perhaps equally due to their defects and their merits. Hardly any kind of reading is more generally popular than that fluent superficial argument of which they afford a specimen, which gives the mind a kind of exercise, leaving it in a pleasing glow of self-congratulation without any of the weariness of labour. In addition to this attraction, Fletcher's writings present the reader with a series of lively and picturesque illustrations, a rhetorical style, and the effervescence of a pure and amiable nature. There is hardly a line of Fletcher's writing which belies the assertion so solemnly made, or offends against the warning so solemnly given, in the following extracts: 'I take the Searcher of hearts and my judicious unprejudiced readers to witness, that through the whole of this controversy, far from concealing the most plausible objections, or avoiding the strongest argu-

ments which are or may be advanced against our reconciling doctrine, I have carefully searched them out, and endeavoured to encounter them as openly as David did Goliath. Had our opponents followed this method, I doubt not but the controversy had ended long ago in the destruction of our prejudices and the rectifying of our mistakes. Oh, if we preferred the unspeakable pleasure of finding out the truth to the pitiful honour of pleasing a party or of vindicating our own mistakes, how soon would the useful fan of scriptural, logical, and brotherly controversy, "purge the floor" of the Church! How soon would the light of truth and the flame of love burn the chaff of error and the thorns of prejudice with fire unquenchable!

'Let us peculiarly beware of inordinate self-love. It is too often the real source of our divisions, when love to truth is their pretended cause. Who can tell all the mischief done by this temper? Who can declare all the mysteries of error and iniquity which stand upon the despicable foundation of the words, I, me, and mine? Could we see the secret inscriptions which the Searcher of hearts can read upon the first stones of our little Babels, how often should we wonder at such expressions as these: *My* church, *my* chapel, *my* party, *my* connexions, *my* popularity, *my* hope of being esteemed by my partisans, *my* fear of being suspected by them, *my* favourite opinions, *my* influence, &c. To all these egotisms let us constantly oppose the awful words of our Lord: "Except a man deny *himself*, he cannot be my disciple."

We may conclude our notice of the Arminian controversialist of Methodism with the high eulogium, that he came as near to realizing this high ideal as



was possible to one who did not understand the belief he was trying to confute. Of all mental gifts the rarest is intellectual patience, and the last lesson of culture is to believe in difficulties which are invisible to ourselves. It is easy to exhibit the Calvinistic doctrine in an odious light, and equally easy to exhibit the Arminian doctrine in an illogical light; and each side preferred pointing out the inconsistencies of their opponents to answering their difficulties. No Calvinist would have denied that a man who did what they said God had done, was detestably wicked. The Reformers, with a sterner logic than we find in their representatives of the eighteenth century, did not shrink from the implied inference that good and evil had different meanings when applied to God and man. We do not find that the Calvinist disputants in the Methodist schism ever either avowed or disavowed this consequence of their doctrine. They avoided coming to close quarters upon that issue. They disclaimed 'carnal reasoning,' and were content with referring the question to the authority of the Bible and the opinion of pious men who had made it their study. On the other hand, the Arminians could not deny that the Bible declared everything that was right in man to be the gift of God; and it was a very peculiar logic which, starting from this premiss, managed to avoid the inference that if some men had nothing good about them it was because God had not chosen to give it them. Every attempt to make the Bible an arbiter on this point only reminds us of the Latin epigram—

'This is the book, where each his dogma seeks;  
This is the book, where each his dogma finds.'

Sir Richard Hill, one of the strongest Calvinists, and brother to the well-known Rowland Hill, published in 1772, 'A Farrago of Hot and Cold Medicines by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, author of the Preservative against Unsettled Notions in Religion, extracted from his own publications,' in which such expressions as could be made to favour and to oppose the Calvinistic dogma were selected from his works and opposed to each other in parallel columns. The task was not difficult, but one wonders that it never occurred to Sir Richard how easy it would have been to extract a similar Anthologia from the writings of St. Paul. There is a position from which, either on theological or metaphysical ground, the doctrine about which the Calvinists and Arminians were contending will always seem true, and there is a position from which it will always seem false, and no human intellect can combine these two views into one.

The result of this Evangelic controversy was chiefly to hammer out into a hard and definite system what is called the Gospel plan of salvation, the corner-stone of which is the fall of man. A whole race, according to this view, are doomed to everlasting pain on account of an offence committed by a remote ancestor whose guilt they inherited, but a few exceptions arbitrarily selected are admitted to everlasting enjoyment for the sake of a Divine Person who intervenes between them and their Judge, and whose righteousness is imputed to them as Adam's guilt to everybody else. A periodical was set up by the Calvinist party, called the *Gospel Magazine*, for the diffusion of these views, from which we may take the following illustrations of them. The hubbub of a

Shrewsbury election leads one writer in this periodical to reflect 'that I have the honour of being a candidate for the city of New Jerusalem, and must therefore obtain an interest in the favour of the Prince of the city, who has a horror of bribery and corruption, and will suffer none to sit in that house which is called the general assembly of the firstborn, except those who are freely chosen without money and without price,' &c. &c. Another writer, who signs himself 'The Gospel Lawyer,' informs the readers of this magazine that 'the Most High has passed an amazing Act of grace for the relief of his insolvent debtors. What a comfort,' he exclaims, 'to those who know that they are involved in debt they can never discharge, that judgment is already passed in the council of Divine justice, and that a warrant may even now be signing against them, to remember that they may flee to Christ as to a sure city of refuge, where they are screened from the wrath of an offended Deity!' But the most flagrant instance of the manner in which the awe and reverence of the creature before the Creator is cast aside, to give place to a vulgar familiarity with every detail of the most mysterious event in the spiritual life, is in the travestie of a theatrical announcement which appears in this magazine, the readers of which are informed that 'by the command of the King of kings, at the Theatre of the Universe, on the Eve of Time, will be performed "The Great Assize." The theatre,' the announcement proceeds, 'will be laid out on a new plan, and will consist of Pit and Galleries only,' which will be easily distinguished by the narrowness of the door and steepness of the steps which lead to the Gallery, from which all will be excluded (the

account goes on, in words which make us glance at the title-page to make sure we are not reading a satire on the Evangelical creed) who cannot pronounce Shibboleth in the language of Canaan.' One of the acts of this drama consists of an assembly of all the unregenerate, in which the music will consist of groans and gnashing of teeth, and the whole is to conclude with an 'Oration from the Son of God.' These specimens of symbolism will suffice to show us what sort of a judge we shall imagine God when we think of Him only as a judge, and associate our dealings with Him, not with our experience of family life, but with the traditions of law-courts and the technicalities of pleading.

Wesley and his disciples differed from this system chiefly in being less logical ; their premisses lead to all the conclusions of the *Gospel Magazine* if they were worked out. Wesley just as much as the Calvinists said that all we *deserved* was hell independently of our actions, and it was an inconsequence after this to speak with horror of the doctrine that God could condemn most of us to hell independently of our actions. He never answered Whitefield when he objected to him : 'If God might have damned all' (without any but original sin), 'may he not damn some ?' It was a noble inconsequence which held him back, and made him forget all theory that led to the idea of a partial and capricious God ; but we must not forget him it was only inconsequence, and that when we wish to weigh the moral tendencies of a doctrine that makes the fall of man its centre and starting-point, we must consider it as it is held logically and consistently.

The reflection with which the sketch of the Calvinist controversy may be concluded, therefore, is equally applicable to both parties to it. They both considered that we were to look to the relation between judge and convict as the type of our relation to God, and they each, in rather different ways, show the influence on their theology of the criminal law of their own day. The legal fiction characteristic of the eighteenth century leaves a strong impression on the system of Wesley; while the Calvinist view of human destiny as a prospect of everlasting pain for the many, with an escape into everlasting pleasure for a few picked out arbitrarily here and there, is only an exaggerated reflection of the harsh and uncertain penal code of the same period. The laws which then stood unrepealed on the statute-books were severe to a degree, which public opinion allowed less and less to be carried into execution, and the result was that the judge became practically the legislator, and the operation of the whole penal code became uncertain and arbitrary in the extreme. A striking instance of the injustice thence ensuing is given by Sir Samuel Romilly in his pamphlet on Criminal Law. Two men were engaged in a larceny on a poultry-yard, late in the eighteenth century, and only one was taken, who was convicted and sentenced to a few months' imprisonment. On hearing of so slight a punishment the other gave himself up to take his trial, which, taking place under a different judge, ended in his transportation to Botany Bay; and while one of these fellow-culprits, for the identical offence, ended his term of punishment and returned to his ordinary course of living, the other was starting for a lifelong banishment from his native lands.

People who grew up under the influence of laws like these, moulding their ideas of justice upon them, and then let their theology take its shape and meaning from legal associations, could not, it is evident, look for anything that we can call justice in the character of God, and would not be shocked at the notion of His dispensing His rewards and punishments without any principle at all.

The pamphlet from which this anecdote is quoted affords us a very remarkable instance of the way in which we do take our ideas of what is just from our experience of what is legal. There could not be a man who was more capable of looking at things as they are, without any theories in his head, than Paley. Yet a part of this pamphlet of Romilly's is employed in refuting a sentence in Paley's *Moral Philosophy* (1785), where this uncertainty of the penal law, which in another part of this very chapter is pointed out as the greatest evil a law can have, is actually set up by this shrewd thinker as an admirable stroke of policy, and that indolence and cowardice by which the bloody code of a barbarous age was supported after the advancing humanity of the age had rendered its operation fitful, is extolled as a masterpiece of political wisdom. 'These severe laws,' he says (of course without a particle of evidence), 'were never meant to be carried into indiscriminate execution. But by this expedient (of keeping up an unreal appearance of severity), few actually suffer death, while the dread and the danger of it hang over the crimes of many. The life of the subject is spared as far as the necessity of restraint and intimidation permits, yet no one will adventure upon the commission of any enormous crime from a know-

ledge that the laws have not provided for its punishment.' Now the influence which made Paley think it a good thing that human law should be made up in large part of empty menace made the Methodists think the same of the Divine law. Wesley evidently felt that our calling ourselves fit for hell was in the same way a confession that a law stood on the Divine statute-book 'which was never meant to be carried into indiscriminate execution,' and the Calvinists felt that it was no more unjust to make a chance example of one out of two equally guilty culprits for eternity than for a lifetime.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### WESLEY'S AMERICAN ORDINATIONS.

FEW men ever attained such a position as that filled by Wesley in his old age. To few, indeed, is the prolonged vigour of body and mind granted which enabled him to the last day of his life to retain the absolute direction of a large and widely scattered body of men; and these, not like the Catholic orders, set at liberty from family cares by celibacy, but entangled in those domestic ties which complicate all arrangements. In this position of eminence he stood entirely alone; for thirty years before his death the only person who had the slightest chance of influencing him—his brother—withdraw from all attempt to share his responsibility in managing the Society, and took what may be called a parochial position, devoting himself to the care of his chapels mainly at Bristol and London.

A rare exemption from infirmity enabled him to exercise this authority to the last day of his eighty-seven years. He notices every birthday only to wonder at his marvellous immunity from all the trials of old age. 'I am seventy-three years old,' he writes in 1776, 'and far abler to preach than I was at twenty-three.' What natural means has God used to produce



so wonderful an effect? 1. Constant exercise and change of air, by travelling above four thousand miles in a year. 2. Constant rising at four. May I add evenness of temper? I feel and grieve, but by the grace of God I fret at nothing.' Ten years later: 'I entered into the eighty-third year of my age. I am a wonder to myself. I am never tired, either with writing, preaching, or travelling. One natural cause undoubtedly is my continual exercise and change of air.' Two years later: 'How little have I suffered by "the rush of numerous years." It is true, I am not so agile as I was in times past; I do not run or walk so fast as I did; my sight is a little decayed; I find likewise some decay in my memory with regard to things lately passed, but not at all with regard to things twenty, forty, or sixty years ago.' Then he again enumerates the causes of this wonderful exemption from infirmity, and concludes with one which probably had more share in the result than all the others put together: 'To my having had so little pain in my life, and so little sorrow, or anxious care.' The picture given of him by his biographer, Dr. Coke, fully bears out this account. 'To see a man of fourscore years and upwards rising in the morning at four, travelling from thirty to seventy miles a day, preaching daily four or five sermons, reading, writing, visiting the sick, and superintending the Societies wherever he came, and in all this labour to see him a stranger to weariness either of body or mind, this was a new thing on the earth, and excited the admiration of mankind.' Thus an authority wholly exceptional in extent was prolonged to a period wholly exceptional in duration. For a period equal to the lifetime of many great men,

Wesley moved among subjects, not only without a rival, but without a possible successor.

The foregoing pages have been occupied with an effort to show that this supreme position had never been an object of ambition to Wesley. The Methodist Society at Oxford was brought together by Charles; its philanthropic efforts were set on foot by Morgan. The voyage to America, upon which so much depended, was a concession to the urgency of Oglethorpe and others. The Methodist Society in London arose under Moravian influence. Field-preaching was begun by Whitefield; Wesley was dragged into it reluctantly, as he was afterwards with equal reluctance led to sanction lay-preaching by the urgency of his mother. It was field-preaching which gave the whole movement that aggressive character which fitted it to cope with the evils of that turbulent heathen age in which it arose, and it was exactly this, as we have seen, which gave the clergy of the day the most offence. How long might Wesley have preached in the pulpits of Bristol and Newcastle-upon-Tyne before a grimy collier, whose every other word was an oath, would have made his way among the respectabilities who filled the pews? No energy and holiness in the routine path of parochial duty could have made the slightest effect upon a large number of those he was destined to convert. The first element of success was that the war should be carried into the enemy's country. Not a step could be taken in the right direction till Wesley had left the parish churches for the open fields, and he was led to this step by a wisdom that was not his own. But when fully convinced that he was intended to take a peculiar path, he still thought

that he might remain a minister of the Church of England. He saw that there was a work to be done for which the hierarchy of the Church required the supplement of a Society, so far not belonging to the Church as that her formularies did not contain them, so far belonging to it that they were, in the actual state of society, a necessary means of carrying out her aims. He was ready, in short, to occupy towards the Church of England a position only so far different from that which Ignatius Loyola occupied in the Church of Rome as the circumstances of the Anglican Church in the eighteenth century differed from those of the Roman Catholic in the sixteenth. But Paul III. had hesitated long, in the days of Luther, before he granted his bull of incorporation to a body of zealous defenders; and the English Bishops, who came nearest to his position with regard to the Anglican Loyola, had no terrible opponents rising up on their own soil to dissolve the scruples of jealous authority in the fears of endangered security, and weld together those who had the same nominal aims with a strong pressure from without. It was not in their power to crush the new Order, but the strange anomalies of English law had left it in their power to force it to become a sect. If it was possible that the Church of England should sanction an itinerant Order preaching her doctrines, and, with the few additions necessary to secure their own existence, enforcing her rules, the clergy of the eighteenth century determined to make it impossible. They excommunicated the Methodists; they set on the mob to stone them; they diverted all the energy which had been spent upon Deists and Arians to attack the men who preached the Gospel to

heathens. Thus forced into a camp of their own, organization and discipline became a necessity to the Order. They would gladly still have attended the parish churches; they did for very long continue to repair to them for the sacred rites which formed their pledges of church membership; but even this had to be given up at last, and at the close of Wesley's long life the time arrived for this last stage in Methodist organization and separation from the Church.

No one who reads the efforts made by Wesley to attain harmony with his fellow-clergy will think that any part of the responsibility of the breach rests upon him. In 1745 he wrote to one of them: 'What can we do, or what can your brethren do, towards healing this breach, that we may withstand with joint force the still increasing flood of Popery, Deism, and immorality? Desire of us anything we can do with a safe conscience, and we will do it immediately. Do you desire of us to desist from preaching present salvation as attainable by faith alone? We think you do not desire it, as knowing we could not do it with a safe conscience. Do you desire us to desist from preaching in private houses or in the open air? As things now stand, this would be the same as desiring us not to preach at all. To desist from advising those who now meet for that purpose, or, in other words, to dissolve our Societies? We cannot do this with a safe conscience, for we apprehend many souls would be lost thereby. To behave with reverence towards those who are overseers of the Church of God, and with tenderness to our brethren the inferior clergy? Our conscience beareth us witness that we have already laboured

to do so at all times and in all places. If you ask what we desire of you to do, we answer: We desire that any one who believes us to preach true doctrine may not be discouraged from inviting us to preach in his church; that none will condemn us unheard, but first read what we have written; that you will not credit without proof those tales which pass current with the vulgar; that if you do not credit them yourselves you will not relate them to others (which we have known done), and that you will confute them as far as you have opportunity; that you would hinder your dependants from stirring up the rabble against us, who certainly are not the proper judges of anything at issue between you and us. Now, these things you can do with a safe conscience; therefore, till they are done the breach is chargeable on you only.' This manly declaration is belied by nothing he ever wrote about the clergy, while a letter written some years later to a Cornish clergyman who had been active in diffusing one of these 'senseless tales'—that he had sent to the Society for 100*l.*—shows that his moderate requests to the clergy were by no means unnecessary. 'I must beg that you would either justify or retract this, and that I may know what you intend to do before you set out for London,' his letter concluded; but it was left without an answer. In 1761 he renewed the attempt of 1745, in a circular letter of much the same purport as the earlier one, except that he gives a list of clergymen whom he looked upon as his fellow-labourers, showing us that the Evangelical party had now a decided footing within the Church; but to this letter, though sent to about fifty clergymen, he received

only three answers. A little earlier in this year he had a personal meeting with 'several serious clergymen,' for the same object, which was equally ineffectual. About the same time he writes in his journal: 'I arrived at Wardale just in time to prevent them turning Dissenters, which they were on the point of doing;' and in 1766, at Bingley: 'I preached with a heavy heart, finding so many of the Methodists here, as well as at Haworth, perverted by the Anabaptists. I see clearer and clearer none will keep to us unless they keep to the Church. Whoever separates from the Church will separate from the Methodists.' In 1767: 'I rode to Yarmouth, and found the Society had entirely left the Church. I judged it needful to speak largely upon that head. They stood reprov'd, and resolv'd, one and all, to go to it again,'—an attempt which had to be renewed the same year. In the following year he wrote a letter to another clergyman who had reflected upon the Methodists for calling themselves members of the Church while they had their meeting-houses licensed as Dissenters. The Methodists, he said, had always refused to be called Dissenters when applying to be licensed, and their being called Dissenters in the certificates given them, in spite of this protest, did not make them so. As has been shown, the Act of Toleration, which seem'd drawn up specially to turn the Church of England into a sect, refused to recognize any one who applied for a licence in any other character than that of a Dissenter, the very fact of religious meetings other than the two services of the Church, according to this Act, being enough to constitute Dissent. Parliament was an

ultimate judge in that matter, but Wesley might have said with truth that none of the Church's own formularies were in harmony with this exclusive and sectarian spirit. He was certainly justified in the assertion to which he proceeded: 'We are in truth so far from being enemies to the Church, that we are rather bigots to it. I dare not, like Mr. Venn, leave the parish church where I am, to go to an independent meeting. I advise all over whom I have any influence, steadily to keep to the Church.' This was written when Wesley was sixty-five years old, an age at which we may take a man's expressions of opinion as the utterance of his truest self.

It is certain, then, that Wesley's attachment to the Church did not wear out; and had she recognized him as her servant and received the Order founded by him within her boundaries, the probability is that he would have been the means of reconquering for her all the ground she had lost in the preceding century, and bringing over into a strenuous and perhaps bigoted devotion to her doctrine and Liturgy no small proportion of the nation. And even through all the opposition he met with from the Fathers of the Church, if his Order had been confined to English soil, it is not probable that he would have ever proceeded to the acts which must be considered as definite separation from the Church of England. If it had been possible for his Societies to go on attending his preaching and receiving the Sacraments of the Church from their parish clergymen, he would have gone on exhorting them to do so without taking any steps to put them under the ministration of others.

But if his devotion to the Church did not slacken, his devotion to his own Order increased as he grew older. In the earlier part of his life there is no sign of his looking upon it as more than a means towards a holy life, which might suit some and not others. In his later years it is evident that the Methodist discipline was much more than this to him. His journal for 1764 contains a copy of a letter, which he desired might be seriously considered by those to whom it belongs, and which is an urgent remonstrance with his correspondent for not belonging to his Society. 'The ordinary objections to such a union are of little weight with you,' he tells him. 'You are not afraid of the expense. You already give unto the Lord as much as you need do then, and you are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, even in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Perhaps you will say, "I am joined in affection." True, but not to so good effect. This joining half-way, this being a friend to but not a member of the Society, is by no means so open a confession of the work and servants of God. What can any man think who knows you are well acquainted with the Society, yet do not join them, but that you know them too well to come any nearer to them, that you know that kind of union to be useless, if not hurtful? And yet by this very union is the whole (external) work of God upheld throughout the nation; besides all the spiritual good which accrues to each member. Suppose you find even a dislike, a loathing, of meeting a class, may it not be natural, or even diabolical? In spite of this break through, make a fair trial. Meet only six times with previous prayer, and see if it do not vanish away.



But if it be a cross, still bear it for the good of your brethren.' There is nothing in the letter to show that what made him urge this was any idiosyncrasy in his correspondent ; the letter is to be taken as an address towards all non-Methodists who were capable of receiving it. He constantly in his later years notes the want of discipline—that is, of a Society which people could be put out of, if they went wrong—as the explanation of religion not making more progress among them. He thinks, for instance, that Mr. Fletcher's people exactly resemble those at Kingswood, 'only they are more simple and teachable. But for want of discipline, the immense pains he has taken with them has not done the good which might be expected.'

It is evident, therefore, that if Wesley loved the Church much, he loved the Order of which he was the centre more ; and if he had to give up one, there could be no doubt which it would be. But he had some difficulty in keeping the Methodists to the Church. They had their services, their meetings, their Liturgy (such was in fact afforded by the Wesleyan hymn-books). The mere limitations of time and space must have made them reluctant to add to this elaborate religious ceremonial an enforced attendance at the parish church, where they would very often go only to hear themselves abused, and where sometimes they were repelled from the Communion table for no other reason than their being Methodists. It was impossible that they should not more and more wish to receive the symbols of Christian brotherhood from their own ministers, and for many years Wesley was importuned in vain to yield to this desire. The dis-

inction among those who were appointed to preach the Gospel, of those who had and had not had a Bishop's hands laid on their head, was evidently a patch of old cloth on a new garment, which must sooner or later be removed.

Moved by the difficulties which have been here presented, Wesley frequently endeavoured to obtain Episcopal ordination for his lay preachers, but in vain. Towards the close of his life he shrunk from this step from other reasons than its futility; there was a sort of insincerity in accepting ordination at the hands of men to whom he never meant to yield allegiance. Yet Episcopal ordination was a great need to the Wesleyan preachers, and in 1763 Wesley obtained ordination for one of his preachers—John Jones, who was classical teacher at Kingswood School—from a Bishop in the Greek Church, who happened to be in England at the time. Yet this step was evidently taken with some reluctance. Bishop Erasmus was of course as willing to ordain a hundred preachers as one, but not only was Wesley contented with this slender emanation of Episcopal influence, but he was extremely displeased with some of his lay preachers who took advantage of it without asking his permission, and expelled them the Society. Charles, more consistent, refused to recognize Jones as a priest, and consequently to co-operate with him in the administration of the Sacrament, thereby driving him out of the Society.

But time increased John Wesley's difficulties, and diminished his scruples. His Societies increased, and the Church gave no sign of co-operation. The Evangelical clergy, at one with Wesley as to the ideal of Christianity, were wholly at issue with him as to the

social machinery by which he hoped to carry it out. More and more he felt himself to stand alone; more and more the logical issues of this isolation must have been pressed upon him. Such was the state of things—on the one hand an urgent need of clerical co-operation; on the other, antagonism or neutrality—when great events intervened to clear the stage, and to prepare a region where, free from all adventitious entanglement, this problem of Church government might be worked out on its own merits.

The Church of England was never fully established in the United States of America. There were good reasons why the traditions of Episcopal government should be hateful in the Northern States, and here the established form of worship was Independency; that is, the existence of each congregation as a separate Church, subordinate only to the pastors and elders of its own election. In the South, colonized to a considerable extent under Cavalier influence, the Church of England was indeed established by law, but it lacked one very important element of Episcopalianism—the presence of a Bishop. The whole jurisdiction of the thirteen colonies was vested in the Bishopric of London, but this supervision was merely nominal, and was not even persistently asserted: the cautious Gibson refused, from doubts about his authority, even to appoint a Commissary. Two of the Stuarts—Charles II. and Anne—intended to supply this want, but the intentions of both were interrupted by death, and the Episcopal clergy had all to cross the Atlantic for ordination. Their character is said to have been low, and certainly, unless Episcopal supervision is useless its absence must be hurtful. Yet in spite of this fact

and the great expense and inconvenience thus entailed on all Episcopalian clergy, the introduction of a Bishop was strenuously opposed in America. The following letter from Franklin probably expresses the feelings of a majority of his countrymen. 'Your political disputes I have no objection to,' he writes from London in 1769; 'but your squabbles about a Bishop I hope to see speedily ended. They seem to be unnecessary at present, as the design of sending one is dropped; and if it were not, I cannot think it matter of such moment as to be a sufficient reason of division among you when there never was more need of your being united. I do not conceive that Bishops in America would be such an advantage to Episcopalians, or such a disadvantage to Anti-Episcopalians, as either seem to imagine.'

It is not difficult to see why the great Republic of the West, as the conflict for independence drew near, recoiled from an Anglican Episcopate. Among the many and the great merits of the Church of England we cannot number a spirit of encouragement towards freedom. Her least candid enemy will not deny that she has unvaryingly impressed upon us the duty of submission to the will of God; her most partial friend must admit that she has taught submission to the will of man with almost equal earnestness; and her scholars in hearing her elevating lesson with languid ears, while they learnt by heart that which is base and servile, have given the last a prominence which the first has had no chance of attaining. And thus it has happened that in the American Revolution, as in every other event to which that name attaches, the ministers of our Church were on the wrong side.

On this occasion, Wesley was, for a short time, on the same side with them. The only attitude which he and all who sympathised with him thought right towards the civil power was that of submission. This is the characteristic which makes such a marked distinction between the religion of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the last could never have been like the first, the ally of freedom. While Methodism was beginning to occupy public attention in 1739, while some were dreading it as a new form of Popery, and others as a revival of the spirit 'which distracted our unhappy country 100 years ago,' there were others who clearly discerned its characteristic dangers, and saw that the Methodists were likely to be only too firm allies to Government. Through all the earlier years of the movement, this spirit was pure gain to the Methodists. The assurance which Wesley gave the Mayor of Newcastle during the alarm of 1745, that he loved and honoured George II. as his father, was not a very noble utterance, but he could never have done his work unless he had been animated by the feeling which in its worst form was expressed in this way, and till the American war there was no opportunity for what was weak and unwise in it to come into prominence. Nor would the American war have afforded such an opportunity if Wesley had discerned in 1775, as clearly as in his earlier years, what those subjects were on which he had and had not a message to deliver to his fellow-men. But thirty-seven years of constant intercourse with inferiors had its inevitable effect upon him in leading him to think that there was no subject of importance on which his opinion would not be useful to others; and in his

'Calm Address to the Americans' he informs them that the great contest in which they were straining every nerve was the result of intrigues set on foot by 'a few men in England who are determined enemies to monarchy.'<sup>1</sup> This expression of opinion was by no means so harmless as it sounds, for by this time Wesley had a large body of adherents (about 7,000 in 1777) on American soil. Whitefield had always had many American followers, and Wesleyan Methodism had been preached by Philip Embury, an Irish local preacher, and Lieutenant Webb, one of the many converts to Methodism in the army, who had sent Wesley an urgent appeal for help, in answer to which he sent out two missionaries in 1769. As coming from the head of a wide-spread and powerful organization, therefore, the Calm Address stirred up great indignation in America, and the Methodist preachers suffered for it. Many of them had to fly for their lives from a general displeasure that was not always discriminating, and which pursued with equal severity those who had and had not committed themselves to the unwise opinions of their leader. These opinions had had so much effect that many preachers scrupled to take the oath of allegiance to the State Governments, and in Maryland an express edict was passed to allow them to carry on their functions without doing so. But the Methodists in America after the war shared the general privation of the Sacraments of the Church, common to the whole Episcopalian party. The Episcopal clergy were almost all driven away, and the Americans, no longer subjects of the British Crown, could not obtain

<sup>1</sup> He did not, however, long retain this view.

fresh ordination without perjuring themselves by the oath of allegiance.

The Episcopal Church was now a voluntary association in America, on the footing of any other sect, but inferior to any other sect in this respect, that without sanction from home it could not make provisions for its own continuance. This sanction the American clergy sought in vain. There is a very characteristic letter from Franklin (1781), advising them to follow the example of 'the first clergy in Scotland soon after their conversion,' when they assembled in the Cathedral of St. Andrews, and, after prayer for direction, elected a Bishop. 'If the British Islands were sunk in the sea,' he proceeds, with his dry good sense, 'you would probably take some such method as this; and if they persist in denying you ordination, 'tis much the same as if they were. A hundred years hence, when people are more enlightened, 'twill be wondered at that men in America, qualified by their learning and piety to pray for and instruct their neighbours, should not be permitted to do it till they have made a voyage of 6,000 miles to ask leave of a cross old gentleman at Canterbury, who seems by your account to have as little regard for the souls of the people as King William's Attorney-General for those of Virginia, when, on being reminded that the people of Virginia had souls to be saved as well as those of England, he told them, "Damn your souls! Make tobacco."'

The step suggested by Franklin was actually taken by some of the Methodists, who withdrew from the Wesleyan Connexion, and of course from the Church of England, elected three Superintendents, and by

this formidable schism threatened the very existence of the Methodist Order on American soil. They were brought back to the Church by the influence of Francis Asbury, one of the earliest lay preachers sent out by Wesley, who had been obliged, in spite of a cautious neutrality, to lie hidden two years during the war. After efforts which testify to his tact and influence, he succeeded in having the ordinations declared invalid. The fact of this temporary schism shows how urgent was the necessity for some new regulations as to Church government among the American Episcopalians.

Thus all the difficulties which the Wesleyans had to encounter in England were in America present in an exaggerated form, while the Episcopal supremacy, which was here a barrier in the way of breaking through these difficulties, did not there exist. It seemed an opportunity specially designed to press upon the consideration of those whom it concerned, the question whether they who were appointed to instruct the ignorant and rebuke the guilty were not by that very fact at liberty to dispense to them the symbols of brotherhood, and whether, in the highly organized system of Church government which had sprung up, the retention of a professed subordination to the hostile ministers of a Church which refused to recognize any but servants or aliens, was more than an empty form. Wesley did not answer this question in the way which would seem most natural—that the administration of the Sacraments was a function no longer to be divided from that of the preacher. He was still, in some important senses, a High Churchman. To have allowed all his lay preachers to



administer the Sacraments would have been too great a departure from this system, but a middle way was found, which one can hardly think would have been satisfactory to a logical mind like Wesley's if it had not been somewhat weakened,—not so much by age, as by a long abstinence from intercourse with those who saw things from any other but his own point of view. He had as early as 1746 been convinced, by reading a *Treatise on the Primitive Church* (by Lord King), that there was in that Church only one order of clergy, and that the distinction between Bishops and Priests was therefore unimportant. He believed a Bishop to have no personal authority whatever. In 1777, for instance, he wrote: 'Mr. Corbett said he would gladly have asked me to preach, but that the Bishop had forbidden him; who had also forbidden all his clergy to admit any Methodist preacher to the Lord's Supper. But is any clergyman obliged, either in law or conscience, to obey such a prohibition? By no means. The will even of the King does not bind any English subject, unless it be seconded by an express law. How much less the will of a Bishop. "But did you not take an oath to obey him?" No, nor any clergyman in the three kingdoms. This is a mere vulgar error: shame that it should prevail almost universally.' Wesley cannot have forgotten the Ordination Service when he wrote this, and he was certainly incapable of drawing any distinction between a solemn promise and an oath, so that it is difficult to see how he would have explained it in harmony with this assertion.

Instead therefore of enabling his Societies to join in the rites of the Church by declaring all his

preachers at liberty to administer them, Wesley solved the difficulty by taking the office of a Bishop upon himself. He ordained Dr. Coke—a clergyman whom he had known eight years, and who was afterwards his biographer—and Francis Asbury, whose talents for administration had been so effectively tested, as Bishops of the Methodist Church in America. He did not call them Bishops, and was much displeased at the use of that word, Superintendent being that which is used by him, and by Dr. Coke himself in his biography; but as their function was to be to ordain clergymen, the avoidance of that name does not seem a very important or reasonable proceeding. But he still declared himself to belong to the Church of England, still manifested displeasure when any of his Societies held their meetings during the hours of Church service, and the last important letter he wrote was a remonstrance with a Bishop (June 26, 1790), whose name is not mentioned, who, by giving information against all Methodists meeting in unlicensed houses and getting them fined, forced them to apply for a licence as Dissenters. This letter, which is written when Wesley only wanted three years of ninety, is as clear, as vigorous, and as terse as anything he ever wrote. Yet it is difficult to understand how his clear logical mind could have clung to the name of Church of England membership after he had renounced and defied its system of Church government, unless we suppose that the influences mentioned above had somewhat dimmed his intellectual vision. Perhaps it is always the temptation of a logical mind to make too much of names.

It was in 1784, at the age of eighty-one, that Wesley took the important step which has been just described. It stirred up great opposition in many of his friends, and occasioned bitter distress to his dearest friend. While the affections of the two brothers had survived in all its freshness the vicissitudes of eighty years, their course had of late diverged. John had known nothing of marriage but its discomforts, and had travelled about 6,000 miles a year, and Charles had known the blended joy and pain of close human ties. 'Marriage has sadly crippled Charles,' wrote Berridge of Everton, 'and would have done the same by John and George' (Whitefield) 'if God had not sent them a brace of ferrets.' Thus while the elder brother was more and more wedded to a life of itinerancy, the younger, as a happy husband and father, took deeper root in the quiet of domestic life, not even attending the Conferences regularly; and perhaps the associations of a fixed position among a body subject to his ministrations tended to associate him with the Church rather than with the Order which stood only second in his affections to the Church. In this state of unchanged affection and divergent sympathy, the news of John's American ordinations (which had not been announced to him till they had taken place) fell upon Charles like a heavy blow, and, in deeper grief than his brother had known through his long life, he poured out to an Episcopal clergyman returning to America the regrets and fears awakened by this act in his mind. 'After our having continued friends for seventy years, and fellow-labourers for above fifty,' he writes to Dr. Chandler, 'can anything but

death part us? I can scarce believe it, that in his eighty-second year my brother, my old, intimate friend and companion, should have assumed the Episcopal character, ordained elders, consecrated a Bishop, and sent him to ordain our lay-preachers in America. . . . How was he surprised into so rash an action? . . . Lord Mansfield told me last year that ordination was separation. This my brother does not nor will not see, or that he has renounced the principles and practice of his whole life. Thus our partnership is dissolved, but not our friendship. I have taken him for better or for worse till death do us part, or rather reunite us in love unspeakable. I have lived a little too long that have lived to see this evil day.' Then he went on to speak of the ordination of Bishop Seabury, whose ordination was recognized by the Church of England, who was ready to ordain any of the Methodist preachers, and seems to have been quite ready to enter into sympathetic co-operation with them, and concludes with melancholy forebodings. 'But what are the poor Methodists now? Only a new sect of Presbyterians.' To his brother he writes in the same mournful strain. 'Alas! what trouble are you preparing for yourself, as well as for me, and for your oldest, truest, best friends! Before you have quite broken down the bridge, stop and consider. Go to your grave in peace, or at least suffer me to go before this ruin. So much I think you owe to my father, my brother, and to me, as to stay till I am taken from the evil. I am on the brink of the grave. Do not push me in, or embitter my last moments. . . . This letter is a debt to our parents and to our brother as well as to you.' To this

letter, tremulous with the pathos of a tender and anxious spirit enfeebled by age, John Wesley returns the hard, unsympathising, logical response which fifty years before he had returned to the appeal of his aged father. 'I will tell you my thoughts in all simplicity,' he writes to him on August 19th, 1785. 'If you agree with me, well; if not, we can, as Mr. Whitefield used to say, "agree to disagree." For these forty years I have been in doubt what obedience is due to

"Heathenish priests and mitred infidels"

(a line of his brother's). 'I have from time to time proposed my doubts to the most pious and sensible clergymen I knew. But they gave me no satisfaction. Rather they seemed to be puzzled as well as me. Obedience I always paid to the Bishops, in obedience to the laws of the land, but I cannot see that I am under any obligation to obey them further than those laws require. It is in obedience to these laws that I have never exercised in England the power which I believe God has given me. I firmly believe I am a scriptural *episcopus* as much as any man in England, for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable that no man can prove. But this does nowise interfere with my remaining in the Church of England, from which I have no desire to separate now more than fifty years ago. I still attend all ordinances of the Church at all opportunities, and I earnestly advise all that are connected with me so to do. But what is the Church of England? It is not all the people of England; Papists and Dissenters form no part of it. It is not all the people of England except Papists

and Dissenters. No, according to our 20th Article a particular Church is a congregation of faithful people among whom the word is preached and the Sacraments duly administered. Here is the true legal definition, containing at once the essence and the property of a Church. But I fear you include more than all the people of England who have the word of God and the Sacraments duly administered among them in your notion of the Church of England. What more? "Why, all the believers that adhere to the doctrine and discipline settled under Queen Elizabeth." Nay, that discipline is well-nigh vanished away, and the doctrine you and I both adhere to. I do not separate from the Church now more than I did in 1738. I submit still, though sometimes with a doubting conscience, to "mitred infidels." I walk still by the same rule I have done for forty or fifty years. I do nothing rashly. It is not likely I should—the heyday of life is past with me. Do not hinder me, if you will not help. Perhaps if you had kept close to me I might have done better. However, with or without help, I creep on, and as I have been hitherto I trust I always shall be, your affectionate brother.' Charles's answer shows that all his attachment had grown with his growth, and that now in his extreme old age he loved as tenderly as ever the brother who pained him so deeply, and the Church which had been so cold a mother to him. 'I do not understand,' he writes, 'what obedience to Bishops you dread; they have let us alone to act just as we pleased for fifty years. At present some of them are quite friendly to us, particularly to you. The churches are all open to you, and never could there be less pretence

for a separation. If I could prove your separation, I would not. But do you not allow that the Doctor has separated? Do you not know and approve his avowed design to get all the Methodists in the three kingdoms into a separate body, a new Episcopal church of his own?—You ask, “What are you frightened at?” At the approaching schism, as causeless and unprovoked as the American rebellion; at your own eternal disgrace, and all those frightful evils which your own reasons describe. . . . I thank you for your intention of remaining my friend. Herein my heart is as your heart. Whom God hath joined, let not man put asunder. We have taken each other for better or worse, till death do us—part?—no, but unite eternally.’

Death came to unite them very soon after these words were written. Charles died in 1788; John in 1791. The deaths of the two brothers are characteristic. Charles suffered much in dying, as he had suffered in living; John passed away in the painless tranquillity which had filled so much of his life. And as Charles drew his last breath in the arms of the wife and daughter he had loved so tenderly, John had no clinging human love to sadden and intensify those last hours, and it was only through his beloved brother—whose wife he roused himself to kiss when almost exhausted, that he approached anything of individual affection on his death-bed. But those who had taken to him the place of a family looked up to him with an almost filial affection; and when at his funeral the reader substituted the word ‘father’ for ‘brother’ in the Burial Service, the whole congregation broke into loud weeping, in which his

voice was inaudible. His life coincides with the beginning and the end of the movement described in these pages; had he lived longer, he would have entered on a new epoch, in which words took a new meaning and things a new character. Louis XVI. perished on the scaffold a few months after Wesley closed his eyes; a new world was rising, the past was suddenly remote, a chasm was opened before it which must ever remain as one of the great divisions so history, and on the other side of which is completed that phase of history which in these pages has been spoken of as the Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century.





## NOTE TO CHAPTER IV.

So much of the general evidence discredits the story given in the text as a calumny—that Oglethorpe had intended to break down a standard of virtue in Wesley, too high for what he considered the exigencies of practice, by means of the arts of two young women—that only the acceptance it has gained with Wesley's Methodist biographers makes me think it necessary to point out the following details as clearly discrediting it.

The surgeon's wife must have told Wesley this story before Nov. 23, 1736, when Oglethorpe sailed for England, for we are told that he was hurt by some manifestation of distrust from Wesley in Georgia. In the beginning of December, Wesley writes in his journal: 'I advised Miss Sophy to sup earlier, and not immediately before she new to bed. She did so, and on this little circumstance what an inconceivable train of circumstances depend! Not only "all the colour of remaining life," for her, but *perhaps all my happiness too.*'

From this it would appear that Wesley supposed this trivial circumstance to have had something to do with Miss Hopkey's marriage. Now, can it be believed, if, at the time he had considered this young woman as willing to enter into such a plot as that indicated in the text, either that he would have continued such an intimate intercourse as to advise her on the time of her meals, or that 'all his

happiness' could, in any sense, have depended longer on what she did?

But further, it is to Oglethorpe, whom on the view here argued against he must have regarded as a plotter against his life and his virtue, that Wesley wrote (Feb. 24, 1737) in the following terms. He begins his letter by noticing the opposition Oglethorpe met with on his return to England, and after a somewhat hesitating allusion to the possibility of his deserving it, goes on: 'If, on the contrary (as I shall hope, till strong proof appear), your heart *was right before God, that it was your real design to promote the glory of God by promoting peace and love among men,* let not your heart be troubled, the God whom you serve is able to deliver you. Perhaps in some things you have shown that you are but a man; perhaps I myself might have a little to complain of; but oh what a train of benefits have I received to lay in the balance against it! I bless God that you were born. I acknowledge His exceeding mercy in casting me into your hands. I own your generous kindness to me all the while we were at sea; I am indebted to you for a thousand favours, here: why then the least I can say is, though all men should revile you, yet, if God shall strengthen me, will not I.' He concludes with the following prayer for Oglethorpe:—'Art thou not He that hast made him a father to the fatherless? A mighty deliverer to the oppressed? Hath he ever withheld his bread from the hungry, or hid his soul from his own flesh? Then whatever Thou withholdest from him, O thou lover of men, satisfy his soul with Thy likeness.—And amid all your labours of love,' he concludes with a somewhat awkward change of address, 'it becomes me earnestly to entreat Him that He will not forget those you have gone through for, Sir, your obliged servant, JOHN WESLEY.'

I ask the reader to read over the passages I have italicised, and ask himself whether they could have been addressed to one whom the writer believed guilty of a great crime. It

cannot be denied that in some sense Wesley was affected by the story, even at the time, and afterwards he must have come to believe it, or his biographers would never have heard it. What few indications remain, suggest a state of mind about it perhaps not very uncommon with regard to evidence on any doubtful point—an oscillation between belief and unbelief, according to adventitious influences, without any adequate examination, or even contemplation of the issues involved. When Wesley was writing to Oglethorpe under a cloud, it was easiest to him to forget all about the horrible wickedness (wickedness which I am surprised to find not more adequately realized even by those who have assumed it) which had been imputed to him. On the other hand, when he had to choose between ascribing such wickedness to one less present to his mind, or believing that a young woman, who no doubt had contrived to interest him as a penitent, was telling an equally detestable lie, he preferred the former alternative, and some revelation of Miss Hopkey's character apparently came in to support it. And late in life, when the details had all grown dim in his memory, and mankind was divided into religious people and the world, he may not have felt that he was making a very great imputation on one of 'the world' even in transmitting to posterity such a story as that suggested in the text.



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THE END.

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