

+A BRIEF HISTORY OF METHODISM

AND OF METHODIST

MISSIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

WITH AN APPENDIX ON

THE LIVINGSTONIAN MISSION

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SOVEREIGNTY," AND OF "THE  
PAST AND FUTRE OF THE KAFFIR RACES"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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#### PREFACE

In preparing this volume for publication my object has been to supply what seemed to me a *desideratum*,--a short but clear and comprehensive account of Methodism as it now is, and of the stages by which it has attained its present large development; to give, more particularly, a brief history of Methodist Missions in South Africa; and to do this in such a manner as to place the book within the reach of the European colonist, the Sabbath scholar, and the intelligent Kaffir or Fingoe Kaffir, many of whom have now acquired a sufficient knowledge of the English language to enable them to read, appreciate, and derive profit from the perusal of English literature. It may be said that such a History of Methodism and of Methodist Missions is not needed; that already the want has been met by the Histories of Dr. Smith, Dr. Stevens, and others. The provision, certainly, is ample for those who have money to purchase and leisure to read these elaborate works; but those for whom the present volume is designed have not either. With regard to Wesleyan Missions in South Africa, it may be urged that the works of Barnabas Shaw and William

Shaw, Boyce's "Life of William Shaw," Taylor's "Adventures," Moister's "History," and other books supply all the knowledge needful on these subjects. But the object of this work is to condense much from these varied sources, and, by the addition of my own long experience, to give all the information which the general reader may desire to obtain on these Missions.

It will be apparent to the careful reader that the difficulty of selection and compression has been great. Some may suppose that the volume should have contained some things which they will not find in it; and others may think that some parts might have been left out as unnecessary: but it is hoped that nothing of material interest has been omitted, whilst great care has been taken to curtail whenever the subject admitted of it. My own observation and experience of thirty-six years should have some degree of weight in assisting me to form correct views of many facts recorded and events brought under consideration.

There is another reason which cannot be ignored, and is of growing importance; in stating which I have no personal or party feeling, but simply record it as a fact; namely, that the Roman Catholics are coming into the country in considerable force, and are pushing their way on the right hand and on the left. Many of the Episcopalians also affirm that the "so-called" Wesleyan Church is no Church, that the Ministry has no valid ordination, and that the people are "renegades." As a natural sequence, they hold that the whole should be absorbed in a Church which can establish its credentials to connexion with remote periods of Church history, and even with the New Testament itself. These specious representations are embarrassing to the minds of the natives as well as others; and an antidote is greatly needed. This antidote I have sought to provide in the pages of this book. Nothing has been written in a polemical spirit; but in the chapters on Church Organization and Polity an attempt has been made to prove that the Wesleyan Methodist Church is a true Scriptural Church, and that it has the high approval of God, who has very signally set the stamp of His approbation upon it in the extensive spiritual good which it has been the means of effecting in the world.

In the preparation of the first part of this volume the following works have been placed more or less under contribution: Dr. George Smith's and Dr. Steven's Histories of Methodism, Kirk's "Mother of the Wesleys," Tyerman's "Life of the Rev. Samuel Wesley," "Lives of early Methodist Preachers," Jackson's "Centenary of Methodism," Dr. Rigg's "Essays for the Times," Watson's "Life of Wesley," Crook's "Ireland," the "Minutes of Conference," the "London Quarterly Review," Peirce's "Wesleyan Polity," &c.

In order to secure the largest amount of information in the smallest space, I have treated the period of each chapter as an epoch, and have endeavoured to group around it the subjects and facts relating thereto. Sometimes the order of dates has been a little violated, but, it is hoped, without confusion or detriment.

In preparing the latter part of the volume, the works before enumerated have been consulted; and in some places the Rev. William Shaw's "Story of my Mission" has

rendered valuable aid: periodicals and miscellaneous papers have also been made use of, so far as they could contribute to the correctness and completeness of the whole. Ten years have elapsed since the first materials for this work began to be prepared; during which period I have sought to utilize such information as has come within my reach; while my own observation and long experience have supplied such parts as could be obtained in no other way. In committing the book to the notice of the Christian public, I am conscious of much that is defective. Some apology for this may be found in the fact that the work has been carried on under considerable difficulty, and has often been written in a fragmentary manner, consequent upon the pressure of numerous ministerial duties. Sometimes a few days have been devoted to it, and then weeks or months of interruption have followed; so that at times it has appeared problematical whether it would ever be completed and published. I thus have a strong claim upon the leniency of criticism; whilst at the same time I have been actuated by a hearty desire that the book may be extensively useful, and may accomplish to a great extent the objects contemplated in it; so that it may bring glory to God, and advance the good cause to which my life has been devoted.

W. Clifford Holden  
 Fort Beaufort, South Africa  
 February, 1877

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A BRIEF  
HISTORY OF METHODISM  
PART I  
METHODISM IN GENERAL  
CHAPTER I  
THE ANCESTORS OF JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY

Short as this History of Methodism is, it would be incomplete without some notice of the ancestors of the Rev. John Wesley. Those who have time to read the larger works of Dr. Clarke, Dr. Smith, the Rev. J. Kirk, and the Rev. L. Tyerman, will not need to be informed upon this subject. But this History is designed for those who have not the money to purchase, nor the leisure to read, those elaborate works; and who, consequently, must remain in ignorance, unless they obtain information in this less pretentious form.

The times in which the ancestors of the Wesleys lived, and the tragic scenes through which they passed, are full of deep and abiding interest; and must remain so, as long as Ecclesiastical History exists.

Many things of importance must be omitted in this volume, and others must be treated in a cursory manner, on account of the limited space allotted to the theme. But it is hoped that sufficient information may be given to supply a connected and satisfactory view of this part of Wesleyan History; so that some may be induced to obtain more costly works, whilst those who are not able may not remain in ignorance as to the chief transactions and events of this great national movement.

Happily we have not to thread our way through a labyrinth of uncertainty and doubt in reference to this noble family. The Rev. John Kirk on the part of Mrs. Susannah Wesley, and the Rev. Luke Tyerman on the part of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, have so fully explored all matters relating to this family as to leave nothing more to be desired. The learned Dr. Adam Clarke was the first to take up this subject in due form, and to leave information which has been of essential service to those who, having more leisure, have entered more fully into it.

The Wesley family was a family of Priests on both the paternal and the maternal side; they served at the altar and ministered in holy things.

Whilst Samuel and Susannah Wesley, the father and mother of John Wesley, were attached to, and closely connected with, the Established Church of England, their progenitors on both sides were decided Nonconformists; who endured long and harassing persecution in connexion with that noble host of worthies who were ejected from that Church for refusing to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity in August, 1662.

According to this Act, all those Clergymen who refused to conform to the ritual and liturgy of the State Church, were compelled by the strong arm of the law to abandon their livings, and thus sacrifice their means of subsistence, as well as be separated from their flocks. This intolerant Act was brought into operation on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1662; a day which has since been fitly called “Black Bartholomew’s Day;” because on that date more than two thousand of the most learned, godly, and devoted Ministers were ejected from their livings, “taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods” rather than violate the dictates of conscience, by doing that which they felt to be contrary to the will of God.

Amongst this noble band of confessors for conscience’ sake were the grandfather and great-grandfather of John Wesley. Mr. Tyerman thus describes the event: “The previous Sunday had been a day such as England never knew either before or since. Hundreds of faithful Ministers on that day preached farewell sermons to heart-broken, weeping flocks. Churches were crowded; aisles and stairs were crammed to suffocation; and people clung to the open windows like swarms of bees. It would have been pardonable if the Ministers had mingled with the loving exhortations addressed to the distressed crowds before them, sentiments of indignation at the legislative Act which was the means of their removal. But, instead of that, the discourses were as calm as the Pastors had ever preached, and some of them scarcely alluded to the peculiar circumstances of the time. A week after, on the day after Queen Catherine’s jubilant reception, the Act of Uniformity was enforced in all its rigour, and upwards of two thousand Ministers, with their families, were ejected from their livings.”

“What a scene,” says John Wesley, “is opened here! The poor Nonconformists were used without either justice or mercy; and many of the Protestant Bishops of King Charles had neither more religion nor more humanity than the Papist Bishops of Queen Mary.” “By this Act of Uniformity, thousands of men, guilty of no crime,--nothing contrary either to justice, mercy, or truth,--were stripped of all they had,--of their houses, lands, revenues,--and driven to seek where they could, or beg, their bread. For what? Because they did not dare to worship God according to other men’s consciences!”

“Amongst the Ministers expelled by the Act of Uniformity, there were not a few of the most remarkable men that the Church in this country has ever had. Most of them were excellent scholars, judicious divines, faithful and laborious Pastors; men full of zeal for God and religion, undaunted in the service of their Master, diligent students, and powerful preachers. Especially were they men of great devotion, pleading for almost hours together at the throne of grace, and there inspired with faith, and love, and zeal, which raised them to the highest rank of heroes, and made them willing, not only to lose their livings, but to suffer even martyrdom itself, rather than to prove traitorous to Christ and to the liberties of His Church.” It was a day of sorrow to the worthy Ministers who were ejected, and to the flocks from whom they were driven, but a heavier calamity for the Church itself from which they were ejected; for, by this one stroke thousands of her most devoted Ministers and pious people were cut off from her communion.

Bartholomew Wesley, the great-grandfather of John Wesley, was born about the year 1600. The place of his birth is not known with certainty; he was educated for the ministry, and in 1640 was inducted into the living of Charmouth, and in 1650 into that of Catherstone, where he continued until the Act of Uniformity in 1662.

That he was a steady adherent of Cromwell and of the Parliament, admits not of doubt; and that he was so from conscientious conviction is equally clear. The times were exciting; revolutions in Church and State were being brought about in the most unexpected manner, the very foundations of settled society appearing to be removed amidst the surging billows of political strife and Church polemics, in which Charles lost his head, and the Episcopal hierarchy was for the time being destroyed. The course which Bartholomew Wesley took amidst these might commotions and sweeping revolutions, was not the result of ignorance, passion, or caprice; but was based upon solemn conviction, and guided by fixed principle, arrived at after long and prayerful investigation. We do not stop to ask how far he was right, but we simply take the facts as they arrive before us. The closing scene of this good man's life is thus given by Mr. Tyerman:

“Bartholomew Wesley, after being ejected from his church at Charmouth, still continued to reside in the same village, and obtained a livelihood by the practice of physic. He made no secret of the fact that it was his intention and wish to capture the King; and he jokingly told a gentleman that he was confident that, if ever the King came back, he would be certain to love long prayers; for if he (Wesley) had not been at that time longer than any ordinary mortal at his devotion, he would have surely ‘snapt’ him. His were days of strife, of change, of oppression, and of sorrow. He lived to a good old age; for he survived his son John, whose death, in 1678, greatly affected him. He preached when he could, and administered physic as far as he was able. A local historian writes concerning the persecuted dissenting Christians in the west: ‘They were rewarded with cruel mockings, bonds, and imprisonments; they wandered in deserts and in mountains; and in dens and caverns they hid themselves. In the solitudes of Pinney they offered up their prayers, in a dell between two high rocks, which have ever since been called “the Whitechapel Rocks;” and in an old house at Lyme there was recently discovered an ingeniously concealed oak staircase, capable of admitting only one person at a time, which led to a small apartment that had been used as a chapel.’ In such places Bartholomew Wesley joined his fellow Christians in the worship which they stealthily presented to Almighty God. He and they have long since passed to the place where ‘the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.’”

John Wesley, son of the foregoing Bartholomew Wesley and grandfather of the founder of Methodism, was born about the year 1636. At a very early period he was the subject of deep religious impressions, and had a solemn conviction that he was called to the work of the ministry. As a son of the prophets, the spirit of the prophets rested upon him: he was sent to Oxford at a suitable age, and there made great proficiency in the attainment of knowledge, especially in the Oriental languages; thus fitting himself for those responsible ecclesiastical duties which he had to perform.

His entrance into the ministry was not according to established order; “irregularity” attended his steps; and as great events cast their shadows beforehand, in this respect he was not an obscure type of his grandson John.

John Wesley began to preach, amongst seamen, at Radipole, a village about two miles distant from Weymouth. In the meantime the Vicar of Winterborne Whitchurch died, and the people of that parish wished Wesley to preach to them as a Minister on probation. He went; his ministry and life gave satisfaction to those who invited him; he passed his examination before Cromwell’s “Triers;” and was appointed by the trustees to the living. This was in May, 1658, when he was about twenty-two years of age.

Winterborne Whitchurch is “a village about five miles from Blandford, in Dorsetshire, and in 1851 had a population of 595. The income of the living, when it was presented to John Wesley, was about £30 a year. He was promised an augmentation of £100 a year; but, on account of the many changes in public affairs which soon afterwards took place, the promise failed in its fulfillment.”

Oliver Cromwell died about four months after Wesley had entered upon his regular course of duty: days of darkness and sorrow quickly followed. After the death of Cromwell, his son Richard feebly tried to guide the affairs of state; but being utterly incompetent for these arduous duties, great confusion followed; Charles II, was recalled, and Richard retired into private life, and was left unmolested in his obscurity.

Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660; but this was done in haste, and without any stipulations whatever being made as to the manner in which he should proceed in important matters arising out of the extraordinary state of commotion and revolution through which the nation had passed. Hence, as might have been expected, all who were connected with Cromwell and the Protectorate were subjected to the greatest hardships and privations. The Episcopal Church was soon again made the State Church, and all Ministers were required to observe its laws, and read the Prayers and Liturgy. This John Wesley positively refused to do; for which contumacy he was quickly summoned before Dr. Gilbert Ironside, Bishop of Bristol, who was consecrated about the time of Charles’s restoration. The questions proposed by the Bishop, and the answers given by Wesley, are very characteristic, and strikingly show the spirit of the times; but as want of space will not allow me to quote them, the reader is referred to the Life of Samuel Wesley by the Rev. Luke Tyerman, pp. 36 to 41. The result of the examination is thus given:

“This is a long conversation, but it is instructive and useful, (1) as casting light upon Church and State affairs, immediately after the restoration of Charles; and (2) as furnishing several interesting facts in the history of Samuel Wesley’s father. Passing over the first, we learn that John Wesley, like his grandson of the same name, was a man of shrewd sense and pluck. He adhered to the Parliament and to the Commonwealth to the last moment; but when he saw that the Commonwealth was doomed, and that the nation was resolved to restore the monarchy, like a man of sense, he laid aside his sword and quietly submitted. His continued firm adherence to the cause of the Commonwealth—‘to the last gasp,’ as the Bishop put it—brought him into trouble after the King’s return; but



royal clemency was properly exercised towards him, and there was an end of the affair. He had preferred another kind of government; but now that Charles, by the voice of the nation, was seated upon the throne, Wesley took the oath of allegiance, and faithfully kept it.”

He was not, however, long permitted to enjoy his liberty. His conversation with Bishop Ironside occurred sometime during the year 1661. About the same period he was arrested, on the Lord’s day, as he was coming out of church, and was carried to Blandford, where he was committed to prison. The reason of his arrest was exactly the same as that which brought him before the Bishop of Bristol. He would not use the Liturgy. His enemies had accused him to the Bishop, but without effect, for the Bishop as yet was really without jurisdiction. King Charles had appointed Bishops to several dioceses, and the Liturgy had been introduced into those churches where the Ministers were avowedly Episcopalians; but it was not until the month of November, 1661, that the Prayer Book was revised by Convocation; and it was not until August, 1662, that the use of it was made binding. It is true that, during the summer of 1660, a Bill had been passed by Parliament, giving power to expel from Church livings every incumbent who had not been ordained by an ecclesiastic; and by this Act John Wesley might have been expelled from the living of Winterborne Whitchurch. But this was not the ground taken by Sir Gerard Napper and the other parishioners who were inimical to his person and ministry. Probably they were not aware, or were not in a position to prove, that he had not received ordination; and hence their illegal plot to imprison and expel him, because, in conducting Divine service in his church, he persisted in his refusal to use the Book of Common Prayer.

It was within two years after the restoration of Charles II. That Wesley was arrested and committed to Blandford gaol on such a charge. Sir Gerard Napper had been his most furious enemy, and the most forward in committing him; but after Wesley had lain in prison for some length of time Sir Gerard broke his collar-bone, and, perhaps thinking that the disaster had happened as a judgment upon him for his cruelty to the young Minister, he requested some of his friends to bail him; and told them, that if they refused, he would give bail himself. At length, by an order of the Privy Council, dated July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1661, it was directed that he should be discharged from his then imprisonment, upon taking the oaths of supremacy and allegiance. He was taken accordingly before a magistrate, who, for some reason, declined administering the oaths, but issued a warrant dated July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1661, commanding him to appear before the Judges of the assizes to be holden at Dorchester on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August following. He was tried accordingly and liberated; but the notable 24<sup>th</sup> of August, 1662, quickly followed, when he was ejected from his living, in company with two thousand others.

“Little more,” writes Mr. Tyerman, “remains to be said concerning Samuel Wesley’s father. Where he spent the first six months after his ejection from his benefice, we have no means of knowing. Probably, however, he remained in the same village where he had spent the last four years, inasmuch as it was here that his son Samuel was born, only four months after the youthful Minister and his wife were cast out of their vicarage. On February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1663, when Samuel Wesley was only nine weeks old, his father and his mother removed to Melcombe. Before their arrival their old enemy, Sir Gerard Napper,

and seven other magistrates, by some stretch of authority, had turned out of office the May and Aldermen of the borough, and had put into their place others more subservient to their will. Accordingly, when young Wesley and his wife, with their infant child, reached Melcombe, they found that the new Corporation had made an order against their settlement in the town; and that if they persisted in settling there, a fine of £20 was to be levied upon the owner of the house in which they lived, and five shillings per week upon themselves. Wesley waited upon the Mayor and some others, pleading that he had lived in Melcombe previously; and offering to give security for his proper behaviour; but all was of no avail; for, a few days afterwards, another order was drawn up for putting the former one into execution. These violent proceedings drove John Wesley and his family from the town, where, a few years before, he had lived beloved by all who knew him. He now went to Ilminster, Bridgewater, and Taunton; in all of which places the Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists treated him with great kindness, and where he preached almost every day.”

It was not long before the body of this devoted young Minister succumbed beneath the tempest which was continually bursting upon him, and he found a martyr’s early grave. But he had previously begun to preach in private to a few good people in Preston, and occasionally at Weymouth, and at other places contiguous. After some time he had a call from a number of serious Christians at Poole to become their Pastor. He consented, and continued in that capacity while he lived, administering to them all the ordinances of God as opportunity offered. In consequence, however, of the Oxford Five Mile Act, passed in 1661, he was often put to great inconvenience. Notwithstanding all his prudence in managing his meetings, he was frequently disturbed, several times apprehended, and four times imprisoned;—once at Dorchester for three months, and once at Poole for half a year; and once, at least, he was obliged to leave his wife, his family, and his flock, and for a considerable time to hide himself in a place of secrecy. Again and again, the handful of godly people meeting in the house of Henry Saunders, mariner, of Melcombe, were arrested for being present at a conventicle, and were fined, imprisoned, or otherwise punished. Dr. Calamy adds, that John Wesley “was in many straits and difficulties, but was wonderfully supported and comforted, and was many times very seasonably and surprisingly relieved and delivered. Nevertheless, the removal of many eminent Christians into another world, who had been his intimate acquaintances and kind friends, the great decay of serious religion among many professors, and the increasing rage of the enemies of real godliness, manifestly seized on and sunk his spirits; and he died when he had not been much longer an inhabitant here below than his blessed Master was, whom he served with his whole heart, according to the best light he had.” Application was made to the Vicar of Preston to have him buried in the church; but the application was refused; and in the churchyard no stone tells where his ashes lie, nor is there any monument to record his worth.

From the concluding sentence of Dr. Calamy, it would seem that John Wesley died at the early age of thirty-three or thirty-four. He left behind him two sons—Samuel and Matthew, and a faithful wife, who remained his widow for about half a century.

Limited space would forbid further details concerning Samuel Wesley's father; but, in fact, such details do not exist. "John Wesley, though young in years, evinced a mind elevated far above the common level, even of those who have had the advantages of a collegiate education. He was no unthinking zealot or timid changeling. He had made himself master of the controverted points between the Established Church and Dissenters; and his opinions, being founded upon conviction, were held with the fidelity of a martyr's grasp. To say nothing of other facts, his interview with the Bishop of Bristol displays the same sincere and zealous piety, the same manly sense, and the same heroic yet respectful boldness, which distinguished his son Samuel and his grandsons John and Charles in after years." Dr. Adam Clarke observes, that from the same conversation "the reader may learn two important facts: (1.) That the grandfather of the founder of Methodism was a lay preacher. (2.) That he was an Itinerant Evangelist. Indeed, we find in John Wesley's history an epitome of the Methodism which sprang up, through the instrumentality of his grandsons John and Charles; his mode of preaching, matter, manner, and success, bearing a striking resemblance to theirs and to their coadjutors'."

The grandmother of John Wesley, on the paternal side, was thus left a young widow with two small children, to struggle through the world, amidst poverty and privation. Mr. Tyerman remarks, "As already shown, her father died when she was young. Her uncle died when her husband was suffering imprisonment for conscience' sake. Her husband died about the early age of thirty-four, leaving her nothing but his holy example, his loving prayers, and at least two young children. How she obtained a living in the early years of her widowhood there is no evidence to show; but, in her later years, she was obliged to depend on the little help of £10 *per annum*, which her son Samuel was accustomed to squeeze out of his sadly too small Epworth income. The whole of her married life was one continued scene of persecution; and the forty years of her long and dreary widowhood, was an unceasing struggle with poverty and its attendant pain." She was alive in 1710; (see Clarke's "Wesley Family," vol. ii., p. 144;) but we have no particulars of her brave battling for bread and schooling for her children, and of her passing away to the "land of rest."

#### SAMUEL WESLEY.

Samuel Wesley, the father of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was one of the two sons thus early bereft of their father. The widow, though bereaved and poor and persecuted, did not lose heart amidst her complicated and heavy trials, but as a true Christian heroine, resolved to do battle against her adverse circumstances; and so far succeeded as to bring up her young Samuel for the Christian ministry. He being a son of the prophets, she was not willing that the sacred office should become extinct in the death of her martyred husband; and, notwithstanding her pecuniary embarrassment, she found the means of sending him to school. Samuel Wesley was born at Winterborne Whitchurch in 1662. He was educated at the Free School at Dorchester, by Mr. Henry Dolling, to whom, out of respect, he dedicated the first work which he published. Young Wesley remained here until he was a little more than fifteen years of age, when he was sent to an academy at Stepney, and afterwards to one at Newington Green, where he continued until August, 1683, when he had nearly arrived at the age of twenty-one.

Meantime he made rapid progress, and gave signs of poetic genius in the production of some juvenile pieces.

At this stage of his history an event of great importance occurred, being no less than that of his leaving the Dissenters, and joining the Church of England.

Samuel Wesley left the ranks of the Dissenters in 1683. This was an extraordinary step, considering the long and bitter persecution which his family had endured from members of the Established Church. His son, the Rev. John Wesley, gives the following account of it. "Some severe invectives being written against the Dissenters, Mr. S. Wesley, being a young man of considerable talent, was pitched upon to answer them. This set him on a course of reading, which soon produced an effect different from what had been intended. Instead of writing the wished-for answer, he himself conceived he saw reason to change his opinions; and actually formed a resolution to renounce the Dissenters, and attach himself to the Established Church. He lived at that time with his mother and an old aunt, both of whom were too strongly attached to the Dissenting doctrines to have borne, with any patience, the disclosure of his design. He therefore got up on morning, at a very early hour, and, without acquainting any one with his purpose, set out on foot to Oxford, and entered himself of Exeter College."

Such is Mr. Wesley's account of the matter. We cannot, however, withhold the following apposite and forcible quotation from "Essays for the Times." After the writer has assigned various reasons for young Wesley's conduct, he thus sums up: "But beyond all these considerations, the Nonconformity of 1682 was very inferior in strength and grandeur to the Puritanism of fifty years before. The nation was no longer capable of such fruit as it had borne in the last generation. It was passing through a stage of deepening degeneracy. The Commonwealth, with all its glories, had in part prepared the way for this. There was probably less religion, and certainly more hypocrisy, in 1659 than in 1640. A show of austere and punctilious godliness had become fashionable: the result was a widespread growth of sanctimonious hypocrisy, and, on the part of a large section of the nation, a rooted disgust at everything like moral restraint or religious solemnity. Then followed the Restoration with its floods of unbridled licentiousness, and its fashion of unbelief. St. Bartholomew's Day silenced by thousands the holiest and ablest preachers in the land, and suppressed the growth of godly Ministers who should have risen up into the offices of the Church. Twenty years had passed since that period, years of increasing irreligion and corruption of every kind. The King was a pensioner of Louis of France. French manners and French morals ad debased the dignity and purity of the country of Cecil and Hampden; the manliness of the nation was in process of decomposition; the Christian faith and heart of the people were dying out; a downward course had been entered upon, so far as respected the national life and character, which neither the Revolution of 1688 nor the victories of Marlborough could effectually arrest, which reached its lowest point in the reign of George II., and from which England was only redeemed by the religious movement of which Methodism was the chief instrument and the representative. Great principles could not maintain their ground in such an age; the more noble or sacred any course might be, the less likely was it to obtain popular support. Hence, in 1682, Nonconformity was fast losing its grandeur. It had no political

party to sustain it. It had lost the heart of the nation. Puritanism had been identified with a great struggle for political liberty, with gallant resistance against a crushing and cruel despotism. Hence, in great part, its hold upon the nation at large; hence its grandeur and sacredness in their eyes. But that great movement had worn itself out. Puritanism under the Commonwealth had done violence to national prejudices, offended popular taste, proscribed the pastimes and pleasures alike of high and low. This, in the case of a nation not as yet very far removed from Popish times, and from the licence of Popish and mediaeval manners, whose squires and yeomen were still in a high degree coarse, ignorant, and jovial, was more than could be endured. 'New wine' had been 'put into old bottles,' and the result was that the bottles burst and the wine was spilled. Moreover, the multiplicity of dissenting sects, and the ignorance, fanaticism, and presumption of not a few self-constituted sectarian teachers, had disgusted the rude but useful common sense of the average Englishman of the period. From the combined effect of these causes, and causes such as these, Puritanism lost its hold upon the people of England. But for this, the Ministers and Parliament of Charles II. Could not have carried into effect their policy of proscription and persecution.

"The people in 1662 were not prepared to run the hazard of another revolution, or, indeed, to run any hazard at all, in behalf of the Puritan divines, whose character, notwithstanding, multitudes among them revered, and whose cruel sufferings multitudes more commiserated. They might pity the poor victims, but they could not rally to the cause. The consequence was, that as years passed away, what had once been a great and noble party, identified with all that was truest, freest, and most godly in England, became little more than a sectarian remnant. Most of the great leaders among the Puritans were dead or aged. In an age of deepening heartlessness and vice, their plain worship and strict maxims found less and less favour. Occasionally, when such a man as Baxter was 'shamefully treated' by such a monster as Jeffreys, there was some movement of indignation. But this did not interfere with the general decline of the cause."

This quotation gives a general and philosophic view of the times, and the causes which would have an influence upon the mind of Samuel Wesley. But, great as this influence was, the real cause of this change was the absence of converting grace in the heart of this young man, and the consequent want of face and fortitude to combat the spirit of the times. "After making every deduction on account of the circumstances under which he, as a Churchman, was led to write, and afterwards to vindicate, his account of his education among the Dissenters, we fear so much in general must be accepted as undoubted. The radical evil, however, was, that neither Samuel Wesley nor his offending companions were truly converted, or had a sense of their Divine vocation to the work of the ministry.'

The turning point came at last. Being a young man of spirit, as his son John observes, "he was pitched upon to answer some severe invectives" recently published against the Dissenters. He had, as we have seen, for some time had his misgivings about Dissent; to him, at any rate, it was not the holy thing it had been to his forefathers. He had seen the seamy side of a worn garment. True, it had been hallowed by the sufferings of his ancestors, and had still the love of many of the excellent of the earth. But the education of Samuel Wesley, a smart, willful, and fatherless lad, had not been such as to teach him

humility. His self-confidence had been nurtured; his powers of disputation had been unduly stimulated. What wonder, then, that he soon discovered himself to be “wiser than all his teachers?” “During his preparation for the task which had been assigned him,” as Mr. Kirk tells us, “he saw reason to change his opinions.” The result was, that, instead of writing the answer, “he renounced the Dissenters, and attached himself to the Established Church.” This was in 1683, when he was probably about twenty-one years of age.

I have thought it needful to place this part of young Wesley’s conduct in as clear a light as possible, as it may partially affect some observations in a future page. It will be needful for me to pass over nearly the whole of the life of this learned, laborious, and conscientious Minister of the Established Church, only stopping to notice a few leading particulars.

He entered Exeter College, Oxford, as a servitor; that is, taking the lowest place; probably on account of his real poverty, as he had only a few pounds to commence with. But difficulties only nerved his resolute soul: he was resolved to conquer, and conquer he did.

After a laborious and honourable College course, he was ordained a Priest of the Church of England, by Dr. Compton, in St. Andrew’s church, on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 1689. This was only a few days after the Prince and Princess of Orange were declared by the Parliament to be King and Queen of England. “Mr. Wesley’s first ecclesiastical appointment,” says Mr. Tyerman, “was a curacy with an income of £28 a year. He was then appointed Chaplain on board a man-of-war, where his salary was at the rate of £70 a year, and where he began his poem on the ‘Life of Christ.’ He then obtained another curacy in London; his ecclesiastical income, during the two years’ service that he rendered, being £30 per annum, an amount which he doubled by his industry and writings. It was while he held this appointment that he married, he and his wife living in lodgings, until after the birth of their first-born, Samuel.” Thirty pounds a year was a very small pittance for the support of himself, his wife, and first-born son; but they were obliged to subsist upon it, with only such other aid as he could obtain from his writings.

After being Curate, the living of South Ormsby was given him, of which we learn the following. “In 1691, or thereabout, Mr. Wesley was appointed to the parish of South Ormsby, a neat Lincolnshire village, about eight miles north-west of Spilsby. It is pleasantly situated; and in 1821 the parish, including the adjoining hamlet of Kettlesby, contained thirty-six dwelling-houses, and two hundred and sixty-one inhabitants; a population probably quite equal to what it was in the days of Samuel Wesley. The church consists of a tower, a nave, and a chancel, with a small chapel on the northern side, and is dedicated to St. Leonard.

“This was no serious charge for a young clergyman of twenty-eight years of age, and possessed of learning and ability like those of Samuel Wesley; yet here, among his flock of two hundred men, women, and children, he resided and faithfully laboured for about the next five years. The living was obtained for him, without any solicitation on his part, by the Marquis of Normanby. Its emoluments were £50 a year, and a house to live in. The

house was little better than a mud hut, and Samuel Wesley, in describing it and his own life in it, writes:

‘In a mean cot, composed of reeds and clay,  
Wasting in sighs the uncomfortable day;  
Near where the inhospitable Humber roars,  
Devouring by degrees the neighbouring shores;  
Let earth go where it will, I’ll not repine,  
Nor can unhappy be, while heaven is mine.’”

After being at South Ormsby for five years, the rectory of Epworth was given him, where he lived and laboured for thirty-nine years, until his death in 1735. The following letter gives a striking picture of the straitened circumstances of the family, and the buoyancy and even playfulness of Wesley’s mind under pressing difficulties.

“Epworth, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1701.

“My Lord—This comes as a rider to the last, by the same post, to bring such news as, I presume, will not be unwelcome to a person who has so particular a concern for me. Last night my wife brought me a few children. There are but two yet, a boy and a girl, and I think they are all at present. We have had four in two years and a day, three of which are living.

“Never came anything more like a gift from heaven, than what the Countess of Northampton sent by your Lordship’s charitable offices. Wednesday evening my wife and I clubbed and joined stocks, which came but to *six shillings*, to send for coals. Thursday morning I received the £10, and at night my wife was delivered. Glory be to God for His unspeakable goodness!—I am,

“Your Grace’s most obliged and most humble servant,  
“S. Wesley.”

His house was twice destroyed by fire, and his poverty was consummated by his being at length sent to prison for debt. But even here his vivacity did not forsake him, as his letter to Archbishop Sharp shows:

“Lincoln Castle, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 1705.

“My Lord,—Now I am at rest, for I have come to the haven where I have long expected to be. On Friday last, when I had been christening a child at Epworth, I was arrested in my churchyard by one who had been my servant and gathered my tythe last year, at the suit of one of Mr. Whichcott’s relations and zealous friends, (Mr. Pinder,) according to their promise, when they were in the Isle, before the election. The sum was not £30, but it was as good as five hundred. Now, they knew the burning of my flax, my London journey, and their throwing me out of my regiment, had both sunk my credit, and exhausted my money. My adversary was sent to where I was on the road, to meet me, that I might make some proposals to him. But all his answer was, that ‘I must immediately pay the whole sum or go to prison.’ Thither I went with no great concern for myself, and find much

more civility and satisfaction here than in *brevibus Gyaris* of my own Epworth. I thank God, my wife was pretty well recovered, and was churched some days before I was taken from her; and I hope she will be able to look to my family, if they do not turn them out of doors, as they have often threatened to do. One of my biggest concerns was my being forced to leave my poor lambs in the midst of so many wolves. But the Great Shepherd is able to provide for them, and to preserve them. My wife bears it with that courage which becomes her, and which I expected from her.

“I do not despair of doing some good here, and it may be I shall do more in this new parish than in my old one; for I have leave to read prayers every morning and afternoon in the prison, and to preach once a Sunday, which I choose to do in the afternoon, when there is no sermon at the minster. I am getting acquainted with my brother gaol-birds as fast as I can, and shall write to London by next post, to the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, who, I hope, will send me some books to distribute among them.

“I should not write these things from a gaol if I thought your Grace would believe me ever the less for my being here; where if I should lay my bones, I would bless God and pray for your Grace.

“Your Grace’s very obliged and most humble servant,  
“S. Wesley.”

Although his enemies had deprived him of his liberty, it is evident from this letter that they could not rob him of his courage, confidence, and comfort; and that if the door of usefulness in his church was closed, he would open one in his prison.

This devoted Minister spent the last twenty-nine years of his life in Herculean literary labours, constantly preaching the Word, and attending to pastoral duties; until, old age coming on, his robust frame gradually sank under the pressure of more than three-score and ten years. His state of mind in his last illness is thus given by his son John:

“My father did not die unacquainted with the faith of the Gospel of the primitive Christians, or of our first Reformers; the same which, by the grace of God, I preach and which is just as new as Christianity. What he experienced before I know not; but I know that, during his last illness, which continued eight months, he enjoyed a clear sense of his acceptance with God. I heard him express it more than once, although at that time I understood him not. ‘The inward witness, son, the inward witness.’ Said he to me, ‘that is the proof, the strongest proof, of Christianity.’ And when I asked him, (the time of his change drawing nigh,) ‘Sir, are you in much pain?’ He answered aloud with a smile, ‘God does chasten me with pain, yea, all my bones with strong pain; but I thank Him for all, I bless Him for all, I love Him for all!’ I think the last words he spoke, when I had just commended his soul to God, were, ‘Now you have done all;’ and, with the same serene, cheerful countenance, he fell asleep without one struggle, or sigh, or groan. I cannot therefore doubt but the Spirit of God bore an inward witness with his spirit that he was a child of God.”



In his sermon “on Love,” preached at Savannah in 1736, he adverts to his father’s death, and says: “When asked, not long before his release, ‘Are the consolations of God small with you?’ he replied aloud, ‘No, no, no!’ and then calling all that were near him by their names, he said, ‘Think of heaven, talk of heaven; all the time is lost when we are not thinking of heaven.’”

### MRS. SUSANNAH WESLEY

Limited as my space is, it would be inexcusable if I were not to give at least a brief notice of Mrs. Samuel Wesley, the honoured mother of John Wesley. She was indeed one of the most remarkable and honoured women that have adorned the page of history, and conferred large benefits upon the human race. For a full-drawn portrait of her, let me recommend my readers to peruse her Memoirs, as given by the Rev. John Kirk in his “Mother of the Wesleys.”

She was the daughter of Dr. Annesley, one of the most distinguished Clergymen who were ejected from the Established Church, when the Act of Uniformity was enforced. His talents, his learning, and his fortune were consecrated to the service of God. They were “offered upon the altar which sanctifieth the gift;” and being accepted and sanctified by Him who is “Head over all things unto the Church,” they were largely used in opposing the inroads of error, and repelling the flood of licentiousness, which now rolled in with such might force. Mr. Kirk thus related the closing scene of Dr. Annesley’s life:

“During a severe and long continued affliction, he was perfectly resigned to the Divine will. He charged those around him not to entertain hard thoughts of God because he suffered so much in his last end. ‘Blessed by God,’ he exclaimed, ‘I have been faithful in the work of the ministry above fifty-five years!’ Having enjoyed ‘uninterrupted peace and assurance of God’s love for above thirty years last past,’ the holy calm of soul was not broken when the waves and billows of death went over his head. ‘I have no doubt, not shadow of doubt! All is clear between God and my soul. He chains up Satan; *he* cannot trouble me.’ His mind had so long been filled with thoughts of God and heaven, that, even in moments of mental wandering, he still breathed the same spirit, and spake of Divine matters most consistently. His head was not free of those projects for God, which in health it was ever full of. ‘Come, dear Jesus! The nearer the more precious, and the more welcome!’ was a sentence often falling from his lips. Then the flood of holy joy so inundated his soul that he exclaimed, ‘I cannot contain it! What manner of love is this to a poor worm! I cannot express a thousandth part of what praise is due to Thee! We know not what we do when we aim at praising God for his mercies! It is but little I can give; but, Lord, help me to give Thee my all! I will die praising Thee, and rejoice that there are others that can praise Thee better. I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness!—Satisfied—Satisfied! O, my dearest Jesus, I come!’”

“In him,” says Williams, in closing his Funeral Sermon, “the world has lost a blessing; the Church has lost a pillar; the nations has lost a wrestler with God; the poor have lost a benefactor; you, his people, have lost a faithful pastor; you, his children, a tender father; we, in the ministry, an exemplary fellow labourer.” He desired that his remains should

rest with those of his beloved wife, and in the old register of St. Leonard's Shoreditch, for December, 1696, we read, "Samuel Annesley was buried the seventh day, from Spittle Yard." He sleeps within the walls of that grand old edifice, but no slab or monument marks his precise resting-place. The Omniscient Eye observes his dust. His flesh resteth in hope; and could we give it voice, it would speak in the words of the ancient man of Uz: "Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee: Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands." (Job xiv. 15.) And when the time of the consummation of all things shall arrive, then shall his dying utterance be realized: "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." (Psalm xvii. 15.)

Miss Susannah Annesley, afterwards Mrs. Susannah Wesley, was born in the year 1670. She possessed a fine mind, which was largely developed at an early period. She applied herself, not only to the attainment of knowledge in general, but also to the study of those more abstruse subjects which related to Church and State, to Uniformity and Dissent; and, possessing great independence of soul, she asserted her right to judge and decide for herself upon points and subjects far beyond what is usual at so early a period of life.

When only *thirteen years* old, she had examined these subjects, formed her conclusions, and resolved to forsake, like Wesley, the Church of her distinguished fathers. "In those perilous and trying times, the children of the Puritans seem never to have been young. That Susannah Annesley at the early age of thirteen abandoned the ministry of her venerable father, and went alone to Shoreditch church, is hardly to be supposed. But from that age the convictions of the highly educated and independent girl were decided. Probably she, no less than her lover, had been disquieted with much that she had seen of Stepney and Stoke Newington students, so different from the spirit and deportment of her parents, from the manners and carriage of her noble relatives, from the ideal which she would have pictured of Puritan godliness and spirituality. She had fallen on an unheroic age; the baldness of the meeting house was no longer redeemed by the heavenliness of the confessors. There was not, indeed, more godliness in the Established Church than in Dissent; probably there was much less. But there was no pretence of superior godliness. And there were at this time great preachers in the London churches—such men as Barrow, Tillotson, Tenison, Stillingfleet, Lowth, and Sherlock, with whom, for popular effect, even such a man as Charnock could hardly compare; while the solemn beauty of the services satisfied her taste and won her admiration. So from this time forth Sukey Annesley is known in her father's family as 'the young Churchwoman,' and by her noble father indulged accordingly. She is the flower of the family. Others are more beautiful, though she is fair, but none more cultivated and accomplished—none so thoughtful and thorough as she. The young Collegian has gained her heart; the family understand that, and let her know that they understand it. Susannah goes to church sometimes; more and more frequently as she expands into a noble woman; after her marriage, which will not be delayed any longer than needful, she will be a Churchwoman altogether. Thus, if the Puritans could not transmit to her lover and herself their ecclesiastical principles, at least they transmitted a bold independence of judgment and of conduct."

She was married to Samuel Wesley in 1690, being twenty years old at the time, and had to go into lodgings in London with her husband, whose stipend was £30 a year. She must

have possessed a bold spirit and heroic resolve to have entered into married life under such circumstances: poverty was her lot all her life through. Each year brought to the family an addition of a child,--in one instance there were four in a little more than two years,--until there were at least thirteen at home at one time. Her poverty was extreme, as we have seen from her husband's letters, but the following quotation gives her own statement.\* (\* Kirk's "Mother of the Wesleys," p. 171.)

"The full story of their thrift, sufferings, and manifold contrivances to make ends meet, can never be told; but there are facts to show that they had far more than an ordinary share of the common troubles of life. When, in the spring of 1701, Mrs. Wesley and her husband 'clubbed and joined stocks to send for coals,' all they could muster was six shillings. A quarter of a century later, five pounds was all they had to 'keep the family from May-day till after harvest.' Thirteen years from the date of the disastrous fire, the house was not half furnished nor the family half clothed. No wonder that when he paid his friendly visit in 1731, the Rector's wealthy brother was 'strangely scandalized at the poverty of the furniture, and much more so at the meanness of the children's habit.' 'Tell me, Mrs. Wesley,' said the good Archbishop Sharp, 'whether you ever really wanted bread.' 'My Lord,' replied the noble woman, 'I will freely own that, strictly speaking, I never did want bread. But then I had so much care to get it before it was eat, and to pay for it after, as has often made it very unpleasant to me. And I think to have bread on such terms, is the next degree of wretchedness to having none at all.' 'You are certainly in the right,' replied his Lordship, and made her a handsome present, which she had 'reason to believe afforded him comfortable reflections before his exit.'"

Her Christian labours were not limited, however, to her heavy domestic duties, and the thorough systematic education of her children, great and onerous as such claims were. She added to them by establishing regular religious services at the parsonage on a Sabbath evening in the absence of her husband. She thus broke down the barriers of church order, and entered upon a course of irregularity, which assisted in preparing her two younger sons for their future course of irregular duties.

Towards the close of 1711, her husband went to London, where he remained several months. His place was supplied by a very inefficient Curate, and public worship was held only on the Sabbath morning. Mrs. Wesley felt that, as the mistress of a large family of children and servants, it was her duty to hold some religious service in the parsonage, lest the greater part of the Lord's day should be spent in idleness or frivolity. "And though the superior charge of the souls contained in the household lies upon you, as the head of the family, as their Minister," she writes to her husband; "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 to 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? As these and other such like thoughts made me at first take a more than ordinary care of the souls of my children and servants; so, knowing that our most holy religion requires a strict observation of the Lord's day, and not thinking that we fully answered the end of the institution by only going to church, but that likewise we are obliged to fill up the intermediate spaces of that

sacred time by other acts of piety and devotion, I thought it my duty to spend some part of the day in reading to and instructing my family, especially in your absence, when, having no afternoon's service, we have so much leisure for such exercises. And such time I esteemed spent in a way more acceptable to God, than if I had retired to my own private devotions."

The worthy Curate complained, and her husband, in writing to her, requested her to desist. Her answer was noble and unbending, and well became the mother of the men who afterwards braved the deposition of prelates, priests, magistrates, and mobs, and despite all opposition succeeded in establishing a great and mighty spiritual work and agency throughout the land.\* (\*Kirk, p. 262.) "Did not this proceeding, however, turn the parsonage into a conventicler, and damage the regular services of the church? This was alleged at the time; and what was Mrs. Wesley's reply? 'I shall not inquire how it was possible that you should be prevailed on by the senseless clamours of two or three of the worst of your parish to condemn what you so lately approved. But I shall tell you my thoughts in as few words as possible. I do not hear of more than three or four persons who are against our meeting, of whom Inman is the chief. He and Whitely, I believe, may call it a conventicler; but we hear no outcry here, nor has any one said a word against it to me. And what does their calling it a conventicle signify? Does it alter the nature of the thing? Or do you think that what they say is a sufficient reason to forbear a thing that has already done much good, and by the blessing of God may do much more? If its being called a conventicler by those who know in their conscience they misrepresent it, did really make it one, what you say would be somewhat to the purpose. But it is plain, in fact, that this one thing has brought more people to church than ever anything did in so short a time. We used not to have above twenty or twenty-five at evening service; whereas we have now between two and three hundred; which are more than ever came before to hear Inman in the morning.'"

Want of space forbids our lingering longer around the many excellences of this remarkable woman, and especially our noticing the part she took in guiding her devoted sons in the early stages of their evangelical career: it is hoped, however, that enough has been given to induce the reader to purchase Mr. Kirk's book, "The Mother of the Wesleys," and read it for himself, or *herself*, as every young female or anxious other must derive great benefit from the study of such a life, and the imitation of such an example. I quote the final scene: "The records of her closing hours are not so ample as we could desire; but they are precious and suggestive, affording every evidence of a blissful and triumphant close. When her son John, after a hurried ride from Bristol, where the tidings of her approaching end probably reached him, arrived in London, on the twentieth of July, 1742, he wrote the touching sentence, 'I found my mother on the borders of eternity!' Nature was rapidly giving way, and the bourne of life was reached. A few days before her bodily sufferings were severe, and her mental conflicts fierce and torturing: but now all doubts and fears are fled for ever. There remains but one desire, 'to depart, and be with Christ, as soon as God shall call.' Her husband and twelve of her children are already with the Lord, and why should she longer tarry? On the twenty-third, just as the eyelids of the morning open upon her, and about twelve hours before her departure, she wakes from a quiet slumber, rejoicing 'with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' Her

exultant expressions attract the attention of her children. They listen, and hear her saying, 'My dear Saviour! Art Thou come to help me in my extremity at last?' From that moment 'she is sweetly resigned indeed. The enemy has no more power to hurt her. The remainder of her time is spent in praise.'

"Just after the customary mid-day intercession meeting,--when fervent supplications were no doubt offered for her departing spirit,--'her pulse is almost gone, and her fingers are dead.' Her 'change is near, and her soul on the wing for eternity.' That solemn commendatory prayer which, more than seven years before, rose over her dying husband at Epworth, and told that the hour of her widowhood was at hand, now rises from the lips of the same beloved son, commending her own soul into the hands of Him with whom 'are the issues from death.' Her look is 'calm and serene, and her eyes fixed upward.' From three to four the silver cord is loosing; the wheel is breaking at the cistern; and those who look out of the windows are being darkened. Her son, and all her surviving daughters, --Nancy, Emilia, Hetty, Patty, and Sukey,--sit down 'on her bedside and sign a requiem to her dying soul.' And what is the death-song which, in its beautiful burden of praise, rises from those tremulous but well-trained voices, as the grand accompaniment of the ascending spirit to the harmonies of heaven? Some of those strains 'for the one departing' subsequently written by the dying widow's own minstrel son, would have been a most appropriate<sup>3</sup> expression of the grateful sorrow of these devout children before Him who had been 'pleased to deliver the soul of this their dear mother out of the miseries of this sinful world.' Well might they have sung in her closing ears:

'Happy soul, thy days are ended,  
All thy mourning days below:  
Go, by angel guards attended,  
To the sight of Jesus, go!  
Waiting to receive thy spirit,  
Lo! The Saviour stands above;  
Shows the purchase of His merit,  
Reaches out the crown of love.'

"When the sound of their song had ceased, 'she continued,' says John, 'in just the same way as my father was, struggling and gasping for life, though—as I could judge by several signs—perfectly sensible till near four o'clock. I was then going to drink a dish of tea, being faint and weary, when one called me again to the bedside. It was just four o'clock. She opened her eyes wide, and fixed them upward for a moment. Then the lids dropped, and the soul was set at liberty, without one struggle, or groan, or sigh. We stood around the bed, and fulfilled her last request, uttered a little before she lost her speech: "Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God."'"\* (\*Kirk's "Mother of the Wesleys," pp. 232-4.)

I close these brief notices of the Wesley family in the memorable words of Dr. Clarke: "Such a family I have never read of, heard of, or known; nor, since the days of Abraham and Sarah, and Joseph and Mary of Nazareth, has there ever been a family to which the human race has been more indebted."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE STATE OF RELIGION IN ENGLAND WHEN METHODISM AROSE

It is admitted by all serious, well informed persons, that when God raised up John Wesley and his coadjutors as the instruments of reviving and spreading true religion through Great Britain, and subsequently through the world, error and sin prevailed to an alarming extent. From the accession of Charles II. in 1660 to the Revolution in 1688, a flood of licentiousness poured over the land; every thing that was calculated to gratify depraved human nature was freely indulged in; “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,” were followed to the greatest extent. This depraved state of feeling and action was not confined to any particular class of the community, but pervade all classes from the highest to the lowest. Under a wicked King, the vilest men were exalted, and all catered for the largest amount of sensual gratification. The government and the state were so disorganized and polluted, that they could not oppose any effectual barrier to this widespread deluge.

As Dr. George Smith observes, “The Restoration completely removed this appearance of morality. It opened wide the flood-gates of licentiousness and vice. The court was the seat of wholesale prostitution. The King was a confirmed voluptuary; and being an utter stranger to virtue himself, he was careless of it in others. He is acknowledged to have been the father of at least eleven children, born of seven different women, who lived successively with him as mistresses, although he had a Queen the whole time, who had to meet and mix up with these women at court. This profligacy exerted a fatal influence on the people, and soon greatly affected the morals of the nation; and wil lecentiousness was accompanied by corresponding progress in brutality and violence. Sir John Coventry, having said something offensive to the King’s mistresses, was seized in the streets of London by some courtiers, who slit his nose open. Vice stalked through the land without disguise. Buckingham, Rochester, Sir Charles Sedley, and the Killigrews, were most distinguished by their wit and libertinism. Charles laughed at their follies, and, by his example and that of his cavaliers, rendered licentiousness and debauchery generally prevalent. Drunkenness was common; conversation was fearfully corrupted; the coarsest jests and most indecent words were admitted amongst the highest classes, and even disgraced the literature of the day.”

Infidelity also with bold effrontery sought to effectually undermine Divine truth, and remove all moral obligation and control, throwing off all restraint, and sapping the foundation of political as well as moral life. This did not apply to a few obscure persons in the lower walks of life, but to those who bore the distinguished names of noblemen, statesmen, and philosophers.\* (\*Jackson’s “Centenary of Methodism,” p. 3.) Of this no doubt can be entertained, when it is remembered, that the pernicious and wicked writings of Hobbes, Toland, Blount, Collins, Mandeville, Shaftesbury, Tindal, Morgan, Woolston, and Chubb, were then in full circulation; and that the higher and more influential classes of society were especially corrupted by their poison. The evil was aggravated by the

appearance, about the middle of the century, of the infidel speculations of Bolingbroke. By many it was regarded as a settled point, that Christianity was a fable, which they were justified in holding up to public reprobation and scorn, for the manner in which it had restrained the appetites and passions of mankind.

As the state was thus polluted and powerless, shameless vice was so bold and defiant that even men of literary talent felt it incumbent upon them to employ their pens in trying to lessen the evil. Much was written and said by the literary celebrities of the day, to expose revolting sensuality, and encourage at least the decencies of common morality. Thus Steele and Addison, Pope and Berkeley and Johnson, employed their satirical or eloquent pens in both prose and poetry, to defend and support truth, and propagate morality; and doubtless much of the most revolting sensuality was restrained in outward action; but the root of the evil remained untouched, and men still gloried in their shame. As Dr. Smith observes: "The virtue of Britain is represented at this time as *in a dying state, at the last gasp*. But could the moral essays of Addison, beautiful, chaste, and elevating as they were, save her? No: all their power, brilliance, and energy must have been totally inadequate. Nothing but the pure truth of God, sown broadcast over the country, and applied to the consciences of the people, by 'the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,' could meet the case, and save the population of England from spiritual death and moral putrefaction. The virtue of Britain must have panted and perished, if some active, general, and directly religious agency had not been brought to bear on the public mind: but such an agency it pleased the good providence of God at this period to provide." Men may try to purify the streams, but if the fountain is corrupt, the effort is vain: men may lop off some of the most corrupt branches, but if the tree is bad, little good is effected. The evil was deep-rooted, the moral and spiritual malady intense.

We might, however, fairly suppose that truth and piety had taken refuge in the Church, either among Episcopalians, Dissenters, or both, where, if they failed in making aggressive action upon the world, they at least preserved evangelical truth and experimental godliness in the Church. Not so; if reliance is to be placed upon the statements and representations of the most credible witnesses of those times. The Established Church, with its imposing array of cathedrals, churches, Priests, altars, and vestments, with the prestige of hoary age, was powerless for good; and the Presbyterian and Dissenting Churches, with less parade of outward show, knew but little of evangelical preaching and spiritual power. In proof of this, one or two quotations must suffice.

Bishop Burnet says: "I cannot look on without the deepest concern, when I see the imminent ruin hanging over this Church, and, by consequence, over the whole Reformation. The outward state of things is black enough, God knows; but that which heightens my fears rises chiefly from the inward state into which we are unhappily fallen."

This was not the worst; for the very seat of vital truth, in the conviction of the judgment and the force of the conscience, was invaded, if not destroyed; and the Christian Church was no longer affected in its action by the only power which God employs for the regeneration of the world and the salvation of men. Bishop Butler, on this point,

affirmed: “It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And, accordingly, they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.”

The great majority of the Clergy of the Church of England were unaccountably ignorant of the plainest truths of God’s holy Word, and were profligate in their lives. Instead of regarding their profession as a vocation from God, in which they were put in charge of souls, and must be accountable to God for them, they valued that profession only so far as it provided for the means of subsistence, and gave them a respectable position in society. Their parishes were neglected; their flocks unfed, and sinners were strengthened in an evil course by the force of unholy example in those who should have been set for the defence of the truth.

Amongst the ranks of Dissent we also look in vain for evangelical truth and spiritual power, with only a few honourable exceptions, such as Dr. Annesley and a few others. The two thousand Clergymen who had been ejected from the Establishment had passed away, and their descendants were by no means equal to the noble stock from whence they sprang. Many still possessed strong political bias against the hierarchy of the Church; but this was not compensated for by corresponding spiritual power. With many, Arianism, philosophic speculations, and cold formality were substituted for that which was true and pure and vital in Christianity.

Thus writes Dr. Guyse in 1729: “The greatest number of Preachers and hearers seem contented to lay Him” (Christ) “aside; and too many there are among us that set themselves against Him. His name is seldom heard of in conversation, unless in a way of strife and debate; or, which is infinitely worse, in a way of contempt, reproach, and blasphemy: and I am persuaded it never entered less than at this day into our practical godliness, into our solemn assemblies, into our dealings with God, into our dependencies on Him, expectations from Him, and devotedness to Him. The present modish turn of religion looks as if we began to think that we have no need of a Mediator; but that all our concerns were managed with God as an absolute God. The religion of nature makes up the darling topics of our age; and the religion of Jesus is valued only for the sake of that, and only so far as it carries on the light of nature, and is a bare improvement of that kind of light. All that is restrictedly Christian, or that is peculiar to Christ,--everything concerning Him that has not its apparent foundation in natural light, or that goes beyond its principles,--is waved, and banished, and despised; and even moral duties themselves, which are essential to the well-being of Christianity, are usually haranged upon without any evangelical turn, or reference to Christ, ‘as fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God by Him.’ They are placed in the room of Christ, are set up independent of Him, and are urged upon principles and with views ineffectual to secure their practice, and more suited to the sentiments and temper of a heathen, than of those that take the whole of their religion from Christ.



“How many sermons may one hear that leave out Christ, both name and thing, and that pay no more regard to Him than if we had nothing to do with Him! What a melancholy symptom, what a threatening omen, is this! Do we not already feel its dismal effects in the growth of infidelity, in the rare instances of conversion work, and in the cold, low, and withering state of religion among the professors of it, beyond what has been known in some former days? May not these things be chargeable in great measure on a prevailing disuse of preaching Christ? And where will they end if the disuse goes on, and little or nothing concerning Him is to be heard among us? How should all the Ministers of Christ, that heartily love Him, that are concerned for His honour, and for the honour of His religion, as Christians, be affected at these thoughts!”

The seats of learning at Oxford and Cambridge, as also many of the Dissenting academies, were lamentably bad. For the most part the rising youth who were being prepared for the sacred office of the ministry in these seminaries were not only destitute of the saving grace of God, but were “wild and depraved.” The Christian ministry was looked upon as a mere profession, the preparation for which consisted in a small amount of learning without the least restraint or obligation; so that, unless Providence should go out of the ordinary course, there appeared to be no help from ordinary sources, but to allow error and sin to go on unchecked, until an angry God should arise to “take vengeance on such a nation as this.” All ordinary and “regular” means had been tried, and failed: Popery had failed,--Protestantism had failed,--High Church under the Stuarts had failed,--Puritanism under Cromwell had failed. The Established Church had failed, and Dissenting Churches had failed. Thus to the few praying remnants it appeared as if the religion of Jesus Christ must be banished out of the land. And this must have been the result, had not God interposed. Many have objected to Methodism on the ground of its “irregularities;” but, instead of this being blameworthy, if something had not arisen *out of the ordinary course of things*, judging from the past, the nation must have been handed over to infidelity, licentiousness, and Satan.

When the night is the darkest, and the prospect the saddest, God often interposes. The time of “man’s extremity” becomes the time of “God’s opportunity:” “the day-star arises.” So was it more than eighteen hundred years ago, when the Day-Star arose and gilded our gloomy hemisphere. So was it again when Dr. Martin Luther appeared from out of the darkness, the leading spirit and the bright star of the Reformation. He broke up the old order of things, became “irregular,” and established a new order of things and course of action. So was it also with the Apostle of experimental religion, John Wesley. God arose from His resting-place; He came forth, setting aside the abodes of learning, “casting down imaginations,” removing the “mighty from their seats,” and “exalting men of low degree.” He brought to nought things that were, and raised from the dust things that were not; that “no flesh should glory in His presence.” Thus the irregular and objectionable points of Methodism constitute its highest credentials, and become the very things which attest its origin to be Divine, and stamp it as the work of God. The chief instruments of this great work rise from obscurity; a “few young raw-necks,” as they were ironically called, commence and carry on a work which is now affecting every part of the religious community and extending to influence to the ends of the earth. The Wesleys and Whitefield arise, being prepared of the Lord, and go forth to convert the

world. The next part of our duty will be to mark the hand of God in the preparation of these instruments and in sending them forth with their messages of mercy to the sons of men.

### CHAPTER III.

#### BIRTH, EDUCATION, AND CONVERSION OF JOHN WESLEY

John Wesley was born June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1703; and, when only about six years old, had a remarkable escape from being burnt to death, his father's rectory at Epworth being consumed in flames. It was thought that an incendiary had set the house on fire. Be that as it may, the family had only time to make their escape in their night clothes; but, after they were collected together, it was found that John was missing. He had been sleeping in a room to which all access was now cut off. In this awful moment the boy awoke, and flew to a window, from which he was rescued by two men, the one standing on the shoulders of the other. A few moments later the roof fell into the flaming mass, in which he must have perished but for this timely rescue. When the good Parson found that his wife and family were all safe, he called upon all present to kneel down and offer thanks to God; saying, "Let the house go; I am rich enough."

If this deliverance was not miraculous, it was so striking as to impress the minds of all concerned with the conviction that God had some special work for John to do. His providential escape impressed him early with the sense of a special mission in the world. His mother shared the impression, and felt herself called by that event to specially consecrate him to God. Two years after it we find her making it the subject of one of her recorded evening meditations. "I do intend," she writes, "to be more particularly careful of the soul of this child, that Thou hast so mercifully provided for, than ever I have been, that I may do my endeavour to instill into his mind the principles of Thy true religion and virtue. Lord, give me grace to do it sincerely and prudently, and bless my attempts with good success."

At a very early age John Wesley became very serious, and his whole deportment was so correct that he was admitted to the Lord's table when he was only eight years old. It would appear as though, from childhood, he did not knowingly and wickedly depart from God; the special training of his devoted mother, and the godly example of his exemplary father, exerting a constantly beneficial effect upon his spirit and conduct..

He left home for the Charterhouse School in London, some say at eleven years of age, and others at thirteen: probably the latter is right. "There could," says Stevens, "hardly be a misgiving of his moral safety in passing out into the world from the thorough and consecrating discipline of the rectory. His scholarship and life at the Charterhouse showed a character already determinate and exalted. He suffered the usual tyranny of the elder students at the Charterhouse, being deprived by them, most of the time, of his daily portion of animal food; but he preserved his health by a wise prescription of his father, that he should run round the garden three times every day. The institution became

endeared to them, and on his yearly visits to London he failed not to walk through its cloisters, and recall the memories of his studious boyhood, memories which were always sunny to his healthful mind.”

In 1720, at the age of sixteen, he entered Christ Church College, Oxford. Here, says Dr. Smith, “he displayed the same diligence as at school. He became an excellent classic; attracted notice there for his attainments generally, and especially for his skill in logic; and was at the age of twenty-one a very sensible and acute collegian, a young man of the finest taste, and the most manly and liberal sentiments. His perfect knowledge of the classics gave a smooth polish to his wit, and an air of superior elegance to all his compositions.”

This was an admirable preparation for the course of usefulness which God had for him in the world. After his conversion this polished scholar dedicated to God the whole of his attainments, and employed them on His work, being thereby a more accomplished and powerful instrument for good than he could otherwise have been.

Whilst he was diligently pursuing his studies at Oxford, his mind became more and more impressed with Diving things, and an earnest desire to be useful to his fellow men was implanted in his heart. The reading of Bishop Jeremy Taylor’s “Holy Living and Dying,” Law’s “Serious Call,” and Thomas à Kempis’s “Christian’s Pattern,” produced a powerful effect upon his mind. These works, however, in addition to having much mysticism about them, were only calculated to place his duty clearly before him, and produce deep sorrow on account of his coming so far short of it, at the same time causing him to put forth every effort in trying to discharge it, without directing his soul to Christ, the Source of comfort, and Author of that salvation which he needed in order to enable him to do what he perceived he ought to do. Consequently, being ignorant of Christ’s righteousness, he went about to establish a righteousness of his own; doing this, not designedly, but in reality, although the design was absent. This led to that rigid course of self-denial, fasting, and Christian duty, which caused the epithet “Methodist” to be applied to him and to those who acted with him.

This name was probably given as a term of reproach; but whether it was so or not, no other word could more fitly express the orderly course of Christian action which he and his friends adopted. Every duty had its assigned time and place, and was performed with the utmost exactness,—fastings, prayers, and sacraments,—visiting prisons, hospitals, and the abodes of the poor, &c.; all being done with so much order, method, and punctuality, as to make the whole one continued “methodical” course. In November, 1729, “four young gentlemen of Oxford, Mr. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College, Mr. Charles Wesley, Student of Christ Church, Mr. Morgan, Commoner of Christ Church, and Mr. Kirkman, of Merton College, began to spend some evenings in a week together, in reading chiefly the Greek Testament. The next year two or three of Mr. John Wesley’s pupils desired the liberty of meeting with them, and afterwards one of Mr. Charles Wesley’s pupils. It was in 1732 that Mr. Ingham, of Queen’s College, and Mr. Broughton, of Exeter, were added to their number. To these, in April, was joined Mr. Clayton, of Brazenose, with two or three of his pupils. About the same time Mr. James

Hervey was permitted to meet with them, and afterwards Mr. Whitefield.”\* (\*Wesley’s Works, vol. viii., p. 348)

Another epithet or nickname given them was that of “The Holy Club.” “What will others think of me, or say of me?” was no question with them; but amidst all the surrounding frivolity, ribaldry, and wickedness of college life, they pursued their course of self-denying, arduous duty. “Conscious duty with them was law.” A rigid system of self-examination was drawn up for them by John Wesley, which, it has been observed, might have been appended to the Spiritual Exercises of Loyola, had it not mentioned the laws of the Anglican Church. The almost monastic habits of life which they were forming, in which, as Wesley’s biographers, Coke and Moore, remark, “the darkness of their minds as to Gospel truth is evident,” were counteracted by the benevolent and active sympathies of Morgan. He had visited the prison, and brought back reports which induced the little company systematically to instruct the prisoners once or twice a week. Morgan also came to them from the bedside of a sick person of the town, and they were led to adopt a plan for the regular visitation of the sick.

It is important for us to note, in this place, the course of severe mental conflict through which Wesley and his associates passed before they obtained scriptural views of the plan of salvation by faith alone without the works of the law. In this respect there was great similarity betwixt his course of anxious inquiry and that of Dr. Martin Luther, the Apostle of the Reformation. To us who have the clear light of scriptural truth shining fully upon us, there appears to be little difficulty about the subject. Not so with them: they had to thread their way through the mazes of dark and difficult error in order to find that truth; yea, often to unlearn that which they had already learned: to take off their attention from philosophy, mysticism, and good works, and to fix their minds on Christ alone. “My kingdom is not of this world,” and, “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink,” &c., was language which they understood not. “Christ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,” was a doctrine hid in deep mystery to them. How much and how long did Martin Luther search, before he obtained the knowledge of this truth! He fasted, he prayed, he afflicted his body, until life was almost gone, seeking to be saved by “the works of the law,” but all in vain. How long, how sincerely, how earnestly, did Wesley pursue the same path before he found Christ! And the experimental discovery of this truth was the foundation on which the whole superstructure of Methodism has been reared.

Wesley and his associates would have made thorough-going Puseyites; and their earnest minds might have carried them forward until they were fully landed in all the superstitious practices of the Romish Church, as is the case now with England’s Popish Cardinal and many of the Clergy. But High Churchism, with all its ritualism, and parade, and show, and effect, is nothing more than the earnestness of souls wrongly directed: they cannot rest; they have constant disquiet, arising from their not understanding the plan of salvation by simple faith in Christ. Had not Wesley, Whitefield, and others pursued their search to the true and grand result, which we shall briefly record, nothing more than a rigid, icy formalism would have been produced.

These resolute spirits were at length brought into contact with the Moravians, from whom, gradually and slowly, they acquired a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. The manner in which this took place appears accidental; but these apparent “accidents” are part of the arrangements of Infinite Wisdom, wrought out by the hand of Him who sees the end from the beginning, and causes His creatures unconsciously to fulfil His wise purposes.

The Rector of Epworth, John Wesley’s father, as he advanced in life, was anxious, for various reasons, to have his son John for his successor in that living. To this proposal, however, John steadily and perseveringly objected, to the great sorrow of his father and to the damage of the temporal interests of the family. But, in doing this, he knew not the spirit which influenced him, nor the hand which guided him. His object was to remain at Oxford and assist in preparing young men for the sacred office of the ministry. But God had other work for him to do, and he must be prepared for it in God’s own way. At this critical moment a proposal was made to him to go to Georgia as a Missionary, to which he lent a favourable ear. “The Trustees of the new Colony of Georgia were greatly in want of zealous and active Clergymen, both to take care of the spiritual concerns of the settlers, and to teach Christianity to the Indian tribes in the neighbourhood. The Methodists of Oxford appeared likely to supply the desired agents; and Mr. John Wesley was requested to accept an appointment to that station. For a considerable time he hesitated; but, after consulting his mother and other friends, he consented; as did also his brother Charles, who received ordination with an especial reference to this service.”\* (\*Jackson’s “Centenary of Methodism,” p. 41) They sailed from Gravesend on Tuesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1735, accompanied by Mr. Oglethorpe, the Governor of the Colony, Mr. Benjamin Ingham, of Queen’s College, Oxford, and Mr. Charles Delamotte, son of a merchant in London. “Our end in leaving our native country,” says Mr. Wesley, “was not to avoid want, (God having given us plenty of temporal blessings,) nor to gain the dung or dross of riches or honour; but singly this,--to save our souls; to live wholly to the glory of God.”

Dr. Stevens thus described the voyage, and daily course of procedure on board:

“On the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, 1735, the party, consisting of the two Wesleys, Messrs. Ingham and Delamotte, left London to embark. They found on board the ship one hundred and twenty-four persons, including twenty-six German Moravians, with their bishop, David Nitschman. John Wesley seems immediately, though informally, to have been recognized as the religious head of the floating community, and his methodical habits prevailed over all around him. The ship became at once a Bethel church and a seminary. The daily course of life among the Methodist party was directed by Wesley: from four till five o’clock in the morning each of them used private prayer; from five till seven they read the Bible together, carefully comparing it with the writings of the earliest Christian ages: at seven they breakfasted; at eight were the public prayers. From nine to twelve Wesley usually studied German, and Delamotte Greek, while Charles Wesley wrote sermons, and Ingham instructed the children. At twelve they met to give an account of what each had done since their last meeting, and of what they designed to do before the next. About one they dined; the time from dinner to four was spent in reading to persons on board, a

number of whom each of them had taken in charge. At four were the evening prayers, when either the second Lesson of the day was explained, as the first always was in the morning, or the children were catechized and instructed before the congregation. From five to six they again retired for private prayer. From six to seven Wesley read in his state room to two or three of the passengers, and each of the brethren to a few more in theirs. At seven he joined the Germans in their public service, while Ingham was reading between decks to as many as desired to hear. At eight they met again to exhort and instruct one another. Between nine and ten they went to bed, where, says Wesley, neither the roaring of the sea nor the motion of the ship could take away the refreshing sleep which God gave them.

“Here was practical ‘Methodism’ still struggling in its former process; it was Epworth rectory and Susannah Wesley’s discipline afloat on the Atlantic.”

It was here that these sincere seekers after truth and salvation were first brought into contact with simple spiritual religion, as exhibited in the conduct of the unpretending Moravians who sailed with them. “The great event of the voyage,” says Stevens, “as affecting the history of Methodism, was the illustration of genuine religion which the little band of Moravian passengers gave during a perilous storm. Wesley had observed with deep interest their humble piety in offices of mutual kindness and service, and in patience under occasional maltreatment; but when the storm arose there was an opportunity, he says, of seeing whether they were delivered from the spirit of fear as well as from that of pride, anger, and revenge. In the midst of the Psalm with which their service began, the sea broke over the ship, split the mainsail into pieces, and poured in between the decks as if the great deep had already swallowed them up. A terrible alarm and outcry arose among the English, but the Germans calmly sang on. Wesley asked one of them, ‘Were you not afraid?’ He answered: ‘I thank God, no.’ ‘But were not your women and children?’ ‘No; our women and children are not afraid to die.’”

This affords a beautiful illustration of the practical effect of consistent piety on the minds of others, not only upon the ignorant and thoughtless, but also upon the intelligent and serious. John and Charles Wesley found, in the holy lives and cheerful tempers of these modest followers of Christ, that which they had not found in the halls of learning or the churches of their native land.

From the Journal kept during the voyage it is evident that but little interruption to the regular course of things was allowed. Each duty had its assigned time and place, and was performed with the greatest regularity. This proves in a very striking manner the fixed purpose and unwavering resolve of these devoted men. Only those who have been a long voyage can understand fully the *ennui* of daily life on ship-board; the lassitude of body and mind resulting from sea-sickness and heat; or the various inconveniences and annoyances arising from a number of persons being closely packed together on board a small vessel, with the calms and squalls, &c. But these resolute men allowed nothing to turn them aside from the regular course of duty laid down, or stop for one day their onward career. Here on the broad Atlantic was the practical carrying out of those lessons and habits which had been commenced in the Epworth rectory under Susannah Wesley.

On their arrival in America they entered upon their ministerial and pastoral duties with characteristic zeal and energy. But the rigidity and severity of the course they pursued were by no means suited to colonial life, and quickly brought upon them complicated and harassing trials, which caused them to return homewards in less than two years. Charles Wesley reached England in December, 1736, and John in February, 1738.

The spiritual exercises of John Wesley, as the day of deliverance from darkness drew near, were anxious and distressing. God leads the blind by a way which they know not. He went to America to preach to wandering colonists and convert dark heathens; instead of which he made the humbling discovery that he was not converted himself. As we have already seen, it was by this means that he was brought into the company with the Moravians, and by intercourse with them was led to see that he was not saved. Light gradually penetrated into his mind; but, as beam after beam broke in upon his soul, and fold after fold of his darkness was cleared off, he became astonished and confounded at the discoveries that were made. His philosophy, divinity, and self-righteousness opposed the light; but he was too thorough in his pursuit to be driven back by these unwelcome discoveries of his own state. Hear his own language:

“I was ordained Deacon in 1725, and Priest in the year following. But it was many years after this before I was convinced of the great truths above recited. During all that time I was utterly ignorant of the nature and condition of justification. Sometimes I confounded it with sanctification; particularly when I was in Georgia: at other times I had some confused notion about the forgiveness of sin; but then I took it for granted the time of this must be wither the hour of death, or the day of judgment.

“I was equally ignorant of the nature of saving faith, apprehending it to mean no more than a firm assent to all the propositions contained in the Old and New Testaments.”

“All the time I was at Savannah I was thus beating the air. Being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, which, by a living faith in Him, bringeth salvation ‘to every one that believeth,’ I sought to establish my own righteousness; and so labored in the fire all my days. I was now properly ‘under the law;’ I knew that ‘the law’ of God was ‘spiritual; I consented to it that it was good.’ Yea, ‘I delighted in it, after the inner man.’ Yet was I ‘carnal, sold under sin.’ Every day was I constrained to cry out, ‘What I do I allow not: for what I would, I do not; but what I hate, that I do. To will is’ indeed ‘present with me: but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me:’ even ‘the law in my members, warring against the law of my mind,’ and still ‘bringing me into captivity to the law of sin.’

“In this vile, abject state of bondage to sin, I was indeed fighting continually, but not conquering. Before, I had willingly served sin; now it was unwillingly; but still I served it. I fell, and rose, and fell again. Sometimes I was overcome, and in heaviness: sometimes I overcame and was in joy. For as in the former state I had some foretastes of the terrors of the law, so had I in this, of the comforts of the Gospel. During this whole

struggle between nature and grace, which had now continued above ten years, I had many remarkable returns to prayer; especially when I was in trouble: I had many sensible comforts; which are indeed no other than short anticipations of the life of faith. But I was still ‘under the law,’ not ‘under grace:’ (the state most who are called Christians are content to live and die in:) for I was only striving with, not freed from, sin: neither had I the witness of the Spirit with my spirit, and indeed could not; for I ‘sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.’”

His Journal on his return voyage bears witness that he was the subject of great searchings of heart, and was deeply afflicted with a “sense of unbelief, pride, irrecollection, and levity of spirit,” until he cries out, “Lord, save, or I perish!”

On his arrival in England, God still continued to employ the same instrumentality in leading him to Christ as had already been effectual in teaching him his lost condition as an unpardoned sinner. He had not been many days in England, before he met with Peter Böhler, who was on his way from Germany to America. This learned and evangelical divine was as an angel of light to the inquiring mind of Wesley. He was introduced to him at the house of a Dutch friend in London, and lost no opportunity of conversing with him on spiritual subjects, until he left for Carolina in May following. Wesley’s true state at this time is best described in his own language:

“Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 1738.—I found my brother at Oxford, recovering from his pleurisy; and with him Peter Böhler; by whom (in the hand of the great God) I was, on Sunday, the 5<sup>th</sup>, clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved.

“Immediately it struck into my mind, ‘Leave off preaching. How can you preach to others, who have not faith yourself!’ I asked Böhler, whether he thought I should leave it off or not. He answered, ‘By no means.’ I asked, ‘But what can I preach?’ He said, ‘Preach faith *till* you have it; and then, *because* you have it, you *will* preach faith.’

“Accordingly, Monday, 6<sup>th</sup>, I began preaching this new doctrine, though my soul started back from the work. The first person to whom I offered salvation by faith alone, was a prisoner under sentence of death. His name was Clifford. Peter Böhler had many times desired me to speak to him before. But I could not prevail on myself so to do; being still (as I had been many years) a zealous assertor of the impossibility of a death-bed repentance.”

“Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup>.—I met Peter Böhler again, who now amazed me more and more, by the account he gave of the fruits of living faith,—the holiness and happiness which he affirmed to attend it. The next morning I began the Greek Testament again, resolving to abide by ‘the law and the testimony;’ and being confident, that God would hereby show me, whether this doctrine was of God.”

“Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>.—I met Peter Böhler once more. I had now no objection to what he said of the nature of faith; namely, that it is (to use the words of our Church) ‘a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are



forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.’ Neither could I deny either the happiness or holiness which he described, as fruits of this living faith. ‘The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God:’ and, ‘He that believeth hath the witness in himself,’ fully convinced me of the former: as, ‘Whatsoever is born of God doth not commit sin;’ and, ‘Whosoever believeth is born of God,’ did of the latter. But I could not comprehend what he spoke of an *instantaneous work*. I could not understand how this faith should be given in a moment: how a man could *at once* be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost. I searched the Scriptures again, touching this very thing, particularly the Acts of the Apostles; but, to my utter astonishment, found scarce any instances there of other than *instantaneous* conversions; scarce any so slow as that of St. Paul, who was three days in the pangs of the new birth. I had but one retreat left; namely, ‘*Thus*, I grant, God wrought in the *first* ages of Christianity; but the times are changed. What reason have I to believe He works in the same manner now?’

“But on Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup>, I was beat out of this retreat too, by the concurring evidence of several living witnesses; who testified, God had thus wrought in themselves; giving them in a moment such a faith in the blood of His Son, as translated them out of darkness into light, out of sin and fear into holiness and happiness. Here ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, ‘Lord, help Thou my unbelief!’”

To many it would appear unaccountable how God should allow this sincere and earnest seeker after salvation to struggle so much and so long; but it was in order to stave him out of every other refuge, until he should cry out:

“What shall I say Thy grace to move?  
Lord, I am sin,—but Thou are Love.  
I give up every plea beside,  
Lord, I am damn’d, but Thou hast died.”

*His Deliverance.*—The day-star was now beginning to arise in his soul; the day of liberty drew near, and his emancipated spirit was about to take its first bound, and then to pursue its tireless course through the whole of his long earthly career, and finally to appear before the Throne, giving thanks to God and the Lamb.

In the order of time, Whitefield was the first to find the Saviour. His experience is thus given by Dr. Stevens:

“About the end of the seventh week, after having undergone inexpressible trials by night and day, under the spirit of bondage, God was pleased at length to remove the heavy load, to enable him to lay hold on the cross by a living faith, and by giving him the Spirit of adoption to seal him, as he humbly hoped, even to the day of everlasting redemption. ‘But O!’ he writes, ‘with what joy, joy unspeakable, even joy that was full of glory, was my soul filled, when the weight of sin went off, and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith, broke in upon my disconsolate soul! Surely it was the day of my espousals; a day to be had in everlasting remembrance. At first my

joys were like a spring tide, and, as it were, overflowed the banks; go where I would, I could not avoid the singing of psalms almost aloud; afterwards they became more settled, and, blessed by God, saving a few casual intervals have abode and increased in my soul ever since.’”

Charles Wesley was the next in order. About this time he had a severe illness, so that his life was in imminent danger. When his sufferings were excruciating, and it was doubtful whether he could survive many hours, he was visited by Böhler. “I asked him,” says Charles Wesley, “to pray for me. He seemed unwilling at first; but beginning faintly, he raised his voice by degrees, and prayed for my recovery with strange confidence.

“Then he took me by the hand, and calmly said, ‘You will not die now.’ I thought within myself. ‘I cannot hold out in this pain till morning.’ He said, ‘Do you hope to be saved?’ I answered, ‘Yes.’ ‘For what reason do you hope to be saved?’ ‘Because I have used my best endeavours to serve God.’ He shook his head, and said no more. I thought him very uncharitable, saying in my heart, ‘What, are not my endeavours a sufficient ground of hope? Would he rob me of my endeavors? I have nothing else to trust to.’”

Mr. Charles Wesley, who was thus offended with the doctrine of free and present salvation from sin by faith in Christ, turned his anxious and prayerful attention to the subject, and was soon led to concur in sentiment with his brother and the devout German that salvation must be by faith. Hitherto John had always taken the lead in matters of a religious nature; but this order was now reversed. Charles, who had been the last to receive the doctrine in question, was the first to realize its truth in his own experience. On the morning of Whitsunday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1788, having had a second return of his illness, and his brother and some other friends having spent the preceding night in prayer for him, he awoke in earnest hope of soon attaining the object of his desire—the knowledge of God reconciled to him in Christ Jesus.

About nine o’clock, his brother and some friends visited him, and sang a hymn suited to the day. When they had left him, he betook himself to prayer. Soon afterwards one of his religious acquaintance said to him, in a very impressive manner, “Believe in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and thou shalt be healed of all thine infirmities.” The words went to his heart, and animated him with confidence; and in reading various passages of Scripture, he was enabled to trust in Christ, as set forth to be a propitiation for his sins through faith in His blood; and received that peace, and attained that rest in God, which he so earnestly sought.

Only three days elapsed between Mr. Charles Wesley’s obtaining the pardon of his sins through faith in Christ and his brother John’s finding the same blessing. John Wesley’s own account is as follows:

“Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, I had continual sorrow and heaviness in my heart: something of which I described, in the broken manner I was able, in the following letter to a friend:--

“O why is it, that so great, so wise, so holy a God will use such an instrument as me! Lord, “let the dead bury their dead!” But wilt Thou send the dead to raise the dead? Yea, Thou sendest whom Thou *wilt* send, and showest mercy be whom Thou *wilt* show mercy! Amen! Be it then according to Thy will! If Thou speak the work, Judas shall cast out devils.

“I feel what you say, (though not enough,) for I am under the same condemnation. I see that the whole law of God is holy, just, and good. I know every thought, every temper of my soul, ought to bear God’s image and superscription. But how am I fallen from the glory of God! I feel that “I am sold under sin.” I know, that I too deserve nothing but wrath, being full of all abominations: and having no good thing in me, to atone for them, or to remove the wrath of God. All my works, my righteousness, my prayers, need an atonement for themselves. So that my mouth is stopped. I have nothing to plead. God is holy, I am unholy. God is a consuming fire: I am altogether a sinner, meet to be consumed.

“Yet I hear a voice (and is it not the voice of God?) saying, “Believe, and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth is passed from death unto life. God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“O let no one deceive us by vain words, as if we had already attained this faith! By its fruits we shall know. Do we already feel “peace with God,” and “joy in the Holy Ghost?” Does “His Spirit bear witness with out spirit, that we are the children of God?” Alas, with mine He does not. Nor, I fear, with yours. O Thou Saviour of men, save us from trusting in anything but Thee! Draw us after Thee! Let us be emptied of ourselves, and then fill us with all peace and joy in believing; and let nothing separate us from Thy love, in time or in eternity.”

His prayer was heard. On Wednesday “evening,” says he, “I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.

“I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner spitefully used me, and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there, what I now first felt in my heart.”

This blessed result is as clear as human nature can experience or human language express. Thus at the age of thirty-five, and after twenty-five years’ pursuit, he found that Saviour “of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write.” How long the search! How severe the struggle! How rich the reward! Eternity alone, and the eternal happiness of tens of thousands of redeemed, saved immortals, will be able to declare it. Angels may be jubilant, as a new era of the Church and the world has commenced. The Messengers of

the Cross are now to go forth, proclaiming throughout the world the glad news of a free, full, and present salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Before proceeding further, it is worthy of special note that the plan of salvation by faith in Christ alone was made known to the Wesleys and Whitefield by the Moravians; and thus was laid the foundation of that great work, Wesleyan Methodism, which has extended its influence through many parts of the world, and has to a great extent also pervaded other Christian denominations; and which must, in its ultimate results, go on until the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. Thus the ways of God are far above out of sight, and His plans deeper than the plummet-line of man's short-sightedness can sound.

More than three hundred years had passed away since the Council of Constance had broken faith with the Bohemian martyrs, Jerome and Huss; and contrary to the solemn engagement of a "safe-conduct" had these two worthies been burnt to death, the Papists hoping thereby to extinguish the first lights of the Reformation. But they succeeded not. A long, dark night followed; and when at length the persecuted descendants of the Bohemian and Moravian Christians were driven from their own land, Peter Christian found an asylum on the estate of Count Zinzendorf, in Germany, gathered together the remnant, and founded the Church of Herrnhut, "the Watch of the Lord," from which the light has penetrated to every part of the globe, and more especially was the means of leading the Wesleys and others to Christ, and of kindling a fire which shall never be extinguished.

"The 'Reformers before the Reformation' had not, then, laboured in vain. The Bohemian sufferers at Constance had verified the maxim so often consecrated by the tears and thanksgivings of the faithful, that 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.' There gleam today on the darkest skies of the pagan world reflections of light from the martyr fires of Constance; and Herrnhut, 'the Watch of the Lord,' has become a watch-light to the world. From this people—so remarkable and fruitful in their history—was Methodism not only to copy much of its internal discipline, but to receive the impulse which was yet necessary to start it on its appointed course. Wesley had already learned much from them. In their resignation amid the storms of the Atlantic, he had seen a piety which he possessed not himself. On his landing in Georgia, the doctrine of the 'Witness of the Spirit,' which had dawned upon his mind from the Scriptures, while reading Jeremy Taylor at Oxford, was brought home to his conscience by the appeal of Spangenberg. His unavailing asceticism had been rebuked there by their more cheerful practical piety; his unsuccessful, because defective, preaching, by their more evangelical and more useful labours; and his rigid ecclesiasticism by the apostolic simplicity of their Church councils. And now, hardly had he landed in England from Georgia when witnesses for the truth, from Herrnhut, met him again with the appeal: 'This is the way, walk ye in it.'"

In fine, John Wesley, *spiritually*, was *not* the child of the Established Church of England, but of the Moravian Church; and therefore the Church of England cannot claim him as her spiritual child.

## CHAPTER IV

### OPENING THEIR COMMISSION, AND SIGNS FOLLOWING

Before tracing the manner in which the Wesleys and Whitefield and their coadjutors opened their commission, and the signs which followed, we must notice the baptism of fire, by which they were prepared for their great work. It is thus described by Dr. Stevens:

“Denied the city pulpits, the brothers went not only to the ‘Societies’ and prisons, but to and from in the country, preaching almost daily. Whitefield was needed to lead them into more thorough and more necessary ‘irregularities.’ He arrived in London, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1738. Wesley hastened to greet him, and on the 12<sup>th</sup> ‘God gave us,’ he writes, ‘once more to take sweet counsel together.’ The mighty preacher who had stirred the whole metropolis a year before, now met the same treatment as his Oxford friends. In three days five churches were denied him. Good, however, was to come out of this evil. He also had recourse now to the ‘Societies,’ and his ardent soul caught new zeal from their simple devotions as from his new trials. Wesley describes a scene at one of these assemblies, which reminds us of the preparatory Pentecostal baptism of fire, by which the Apostles were ‘endued with power from on high,’ for their mission. He says, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1739, that Messrs. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, and his brother Charles were present with him at a love-feast in Fetter Lane, with about sixty of their brethren. About three in the morning, as they were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon them, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as they had recovered a little from the awe and amazement which the presence of the Divine Majesty had inspired, they broke out with one voice, ‘We praise Thee, O God: we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. Whitefield exclaims: ‘It was a Pentecostal season indeed.’ And he adds, respecting these ‘Society meetings,’ that ‘sometimes whole nights were spent in prayer. Often have we been filled as with new wine, and often have I seen them overwhelmed with the Divine Presence, and cry out, “Will God indeed dwell with men upon earth? How dreadful is this place! This is no other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven!”’ In this manner did the three evangelists begin together the memorable year which was afterward to be recognized as the epoch of Methodism. On the 5<sup>th</sup> Whitefield records an occasion which foreshadowed the future. A ‘conference’ was held at Islington with seven Ministers, ‘despised Methodists,’ concerning many things of importance. They continued in fasting and prayer till three o’clock, and then parted ‘*with a full conviction that God was about to do great things among us.*’”

In such scenes as these, the Apocalyptic vision was being literally fulfilled: “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell upon the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” (Rev. xiv. 6,7.)

Whitefield was the first of the three to find the Saviour, and to throw off the restraints of ecclesiastical conventionalism. It appeared as though his bold spirit and impassioned eloquence were required to break down the barriers of extreme Church order. Going into the streets and lanes to preach, he willingly "submitted to be more vile." The more calm and methodical Wesley had to be led on, until by degrees he was brought to see the path of duty. Whitefield opened his commission of out-door preaching at Bristol, where he had crowds to hear him; and he soon called Wesley to his aid.

"He was thus employed," says Mr. Jackson, "when he received a letter from his friend, Mr. Whitefield, recently returned from America, and now in Bristol, earnestly pressing him to come to that city without delay. On his arrival, he says, 'I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way, of preaching in the fields, of which he set me the example on the 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.' On the following day, Mr. Whitefield having left Bristol, Mr. Wesley says, 'At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city to about three thousand people.'"

"On his return to London, in June following, he accompanied Mr. Whitefield to Blackheath, where about twelve or fourteen thousand people were assembled to hear the Word. At Mr. Whitefield's request, Mr. Wesley preached in his stead; and afterwards for many years addressed similar, and even larger, multitudes in Moorfields and at Kennington Common, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and other parts of England, as also in Wales and Ireland."

His weekly course of labour was this: "Every morning I read prayers and preached at Newgate. Every evening I expounded a portion of Scripture to one of more of the Societies. On Monday, in the afternoon, I preached abroad near Bristol; on Tuesday, at Bath and Five Mile Hill alternately; on Wednesday, at Baptist Mills; every other Thursday, near Pensford; every other Friday, in another part of Kingswood; on Saturday in the afternoon, and Sunday morning, on the bowling green; (which lies near the middle of the city;) on Sunday at eleven, near Hanham Mount; at two, at Clifton; and at five, at Rose Green. And hitherto, as my days, so my strength has been."

Mr. Charles Wesley also entered on the same course with heroic valour, which soon brought him into difficulties. "During the continued stay of his brother at Bristol," observes Dr. Smith, "Charles was neither idle nor inattentive to the manner of his proceeding, and to the great work which was being accomplished by his instrumentality. At Broad Oaks in Essex, Thaxted, and some other places, Charles preached both in churches and in the open air with great success.

"In consequence of these proceedings, the heads of the Church appear to have entertained serious thoughts of proceeding to extreme measures against Whitefield and the two Wesleys. On Thursday, the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, Charles Wesley, with the Vicar of Bexley,

appeared at Lambeth, on the summons of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to answer a complaint which appears to have been made by some third party (probably some of the parishioners) as to Mr. Charles Wesley's frequent preaching in that parish. On this occasion the Archbishop significantly observed to him, that he should 'not proceed to excommunication YET.' Although this threat did not, at the time, greatly disconcert or distress the pious young Minister to whom it was addressed, he afterwards felt it severely; but having convinced himself that this uneasiness arose from the fear of man, he took Mr. Whitefield's advice, and, on the following Sunday, boldly went forth into Moorfields, and preached the Gospel of Christ to near ten thousand hearers.

"It required a mind of more than ordinary vigour, even with the aid of Divine grace, to sustain the peculiar and conflicting feelings which Charles Wesley's engagements at this time must have excited. On the Thursday before the Sabbath just referred to, he was at Lambeth Palace, and was there threatened with excommunication. On Sunday he preached in the morning to ten thousand persons in Moorfields: in the forenoon he attended Divine service, and received the sacrament at St. Paul's cathedral; in the afternoon he preached at Newington Butts, and went directly from the pulpit to Kennington Common, where he addressed multitudes upon multitudes in the name of the Lord; and in the evening he attended a Moravian love-feast in Fetter Lane, where he felt as though in one of the primitive Churches. On the following Sunday he preached with great boldness, in his turn, at St. Mary's before the University of Oxford, choosing for his subject the leading doctrine of all Protestant Churches, justification by faith. The amount of opposition which these godly efforts called forth, may be estimated by the fact, that on the Sabbath before mentioned, as he was walking to his afternoon appointment, he crossed an open field on his way to Kennington, and, whilst doing so, was seen by the owner of the field, a Mr. Goter, who threatened to prosecute him for a trespass. This threat he carried into effect, and a few days afterwards, Mr. Charles Wesley was served with a writ on this account, and had to pay ten pounds for the trespass, and nine pounds sixteen shillings and eightpence for taxed costs in the suit. The injured Minister endorsed the receipt with the significant words, '*To be re-judged IN THAT DAY;*' words which will as certainly be verified, as was the threat of the petty tyrant."\* (\*Dr. George Smith's "History of Wesleyan Methodism," pp. 178, 179.)

We now have these three worthies fairly committed to preach Christ crucified, and to "call upon all men everywhere to repent." This they do with dauntless courage and wonderful effect; thousands attend their ministry, and a very extensive religious awakening takes place. They have now set themselves at liberty, have drawn the sword, and thrown away the scabbard, and have boldly entered on this career of duty, leaving the results with God. Here is no defined plan, no calculation about consequences, but the fearless entry upon a course of plain duty. "What wouldst Thou have me to do?" has been the inquiry. When the will of God is made plain, that is enough; their feet tread, not only swiftly, but safely; there is no timidity, no vacillation, no question about the care of the flesh; but straightforward, honest, fearless discharge of acknowledged duty.

We have now before us the chief instruments raised up by God, for reviving and extending true religion, and spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land, and,

ultimately, throughout the world. These instruments were differently constituted and differently prepared, but bore the marks of Him “who filleth all in all.” That Being who is “Head over all things to His Church” took these men of different mental capacities and intellectual and religious training, together with their several gifts and graces, bowing the whole to His scepter, and using the whole for His glory.

John Wesley was highly cultivated, cool, clear, and persevering; Charles Wesley was poetic, energetic, and impassioned; Whitefield was bold, eloquent, and powerful. These were “the first three,” and they were all fired with self-sacrificing love to God, and zeal for the salvation of men. The lay Preachers who from the force of circumstances were brought to labour with them, and became their helpers in the Lord, were not equally educated, but were eminently prepared of God for carrying on His work. They possessed clear knowledge of the Word of God, were truly converted, and were endowed with strong sense and a disposition to labour and suffer for the good of others. All “had tarried at Jerusalem until they were endowed with power from on high;” and being “full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,” and taking fire from the holy altar, their arms and hands being made strong by the power of the mighty “God of Jacob,” they went forth, like winged angels of light, with a speed and swiftness which made them almost ubiquitous; they performed prodigies of moral valour, and endured fatigues, and discharged duties, such as had not been heard of since the days of the Apostles. They were “men to be wondered at,” “the Lord working with them, and signs following.”

The extremities of the land were soon penetrated. London and Bristol were the first centres of operation; but quickly Newcastle in the north, and Cornwall in the southwest, were visited by them, and tens of thousands heard the everlasting Gospel preached. They conducted their services in public buildings, or private houses; on the housetop, or in the open field; in the narrow street, or on the broad common; anywhere, everywhere, in this vast temple of God, it mattered not; they had a message to deliver, and they were straitened until they had proclaimed it, and when they had done thus in one place, they hastened to another, and delivered it there. They were men of one business, and of one aim; all the powers of their souls were absorbed and centred in it, and all the powers of their bodies became the willing servants of their burning souls. They thought of nothing else; they talked of nothing else; they lived and laboured for nothing else.

The doctrines they taught were as old as the New Testament, but new to the tens of thousands who heard them for the first time. These doctrines had either been buried for ages, or been obscured amidst the ceremonials of a State Church; and now that they were clearly exhibited to view, they shone as light out of darkness, and possessed a freshness and power which astonished, captivated, and subdued all who heard them.

That might results must quickly follow was only what might be fairly calculated upon. Some men, who undertook the office of prophets, prognosticated that it was only a wild enthusiastic flame which would soon be extinguished; but no! it was a torch lighted at the eternal Sun, never to be dimmed, until absorbed in endless day. They declared that these madmen would soon weary in their course, and being offended, tire and faint; but no! they tired not until the weary wheels of life stood still in death; and in the case of John



Wesley the wheels turned round many times in the fifty years which intervened before his death; but then a thousand more are set in motion, and they and their successors are not to cease their circles until the globe is encompassed, and the earth ceases to revolve, fleeing before the face of Him who sits upon the throne, when death shall be swallowed up in victory.

Let us notice a few of these results as chronicled by competent witnesses. To a gentleman who had requested some information on the subject Mr. Wesley writes: "Few persons have lived long in the west of England who have not heard of the colliers of Kingswood, a people famous, from the beginning hitherto, for neither fearing God nor regarding man; so ignorant of the things of God, that they seemed but one remove from beasts that perish, and, therefore, utterly without the desire of instruction, as well as without the means of it.

"Many last winter used tauntingly to say of Mr. Whitefield, 'If he will convert heathens, why does not he go to the colliers of Kingswood!' In the spring he did so. And as there were thousands who resorted to no place of public worship, he went after them into their own 'wilderness, to seek and save that which was lost.' When he was called away, others went into 'the highways and hedges, to compel them to come in.' And, by the grace of God, their labour was not in vain. The scene is already changed. Kingswood does not now, as a year ago, resound with cursing and blasphemy. It is no more filled with drunkenness and uncleanness, and the idle diversions that naturally led thereto. It is no longer full of wars and fightings, of clamour and bitterness, of wrath and envyings. Peace and love are there. Great numbers of the people are mild, gentle, and easy to be entreated. They 'do not cry, neither strive;' and hardly is 'their voice heard in the streets,' or indeed in their own wood, unless when they are at their usual evening diversion, singing praise unto God their Saviour."

As early as 1740 we have the following record of Charles Wesley's labours: "He passed to Evesham, Westcot, Oxford, and other places, preaching, and withstanding the clamours of the people, till he arrived again in London, where the Foundry, Moorfields, and Kennington Common were his arenas. While in the city he was tireless also in pastoral labours, devoting three hours daily to 'conferences' and to the 'bands.' In June, 1740, he was again abroad among the rural towns, accompanied by his faithful assistant, Thomas Maxfield. He preached in Bexley, Blendon, Bristol, and Kingswood. At the latter place he was especially refreshed by the good results of the Methodist labours.

Methodism had already commenced those deemonstrations of its efficacy among the demoralized masses which have since commanded for it the respect of men who have questioned its merits in all other respects. 'O what simplicity,' he exclaims, 'is in this child-like people! A spirit of contrition and love ran through them. Here the seed has fallen upon good ground.' And again, on the next Sabbath, he writes: 'I went to learn Christ among our colliers, and drank into their spirit. O that our London brethren would come to school to Kingswood! God knows their poverty; but they are rich, and daily entering into rest, without first being brought into confusion. Their souls truly wait still upon God, in the way of His ordinances. Ye many masters, come, learn Christ of these outcases: for know, "except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot

enter into the kingdom of heaven.” He questions whether Herrnhut could afford a better example of Christian simplicity and purity; and yet these reclaimed colliers were repelled from the Lord’s Supper by most of the regular Clergy of the churches of Bristol, because their reformation had been effected by the ‘irregular’ labours of the Methodists.”

John Wesley preaching at Epworth on his father’s tombstone presents a touching scene, which is thus sketched by Dr. Stevens: “On his return he passed rapidly through many towns, preaching daily. He stopped at an inn in Epworth, the parish of his father and his own birthplace. The Curate, who was a drunkard, refused him the pulpit. David Taylor, Lady Huntingdon’s servant, was with him, and announced, as the congregation retired from the church, that Wesley would preach in the graveyard in the afternoon. He accordingly stood upon his father’s tombstone, and preached to such a congregation as Epworth had never seen before. For one week he daily took his stand above the ashes of his father, and ‘cried aloud to the earnestly attentive congregations.’ He must have deeply felt the impressive associations of the place, but paused not to record his emotions. His one great work of preaching, preaching day and night, seemed wholly to absorb him. His hearers, however, felt the power of his word and of the scene. God bowed their hearts, he says, and on every side, as with one accord, they lifted up their voices and wept; several dropped down as dead. A gentleman came to hear him who boasted that he was of no religion, and had not been in a church for thirty years. The striking scene of the churchyard could probably alone have brought him to hear Wesley. He was smitten under the sermon, and when it was ended stood like a statue, looking up to the heavens. Wesley asked: ‘Are you a sinner?’ ‘Sinner enough,’ he replied, with a broken voice, and remained gazing upward till his friends pressed him into his carriage and took him home. Ten years later Wesley saw him, and was agreeably surprised to find him strong in faith, though fast failing in body. For some years, he said, he had been rejoicing in God without either doubt or fear, and was now waiting for the welcome hour when he should depart and be with Christ.”

These are only a few instances, selected for the purpose of showing the great results which attended and followed the labours of these devoted men; results which were immediate, and which bore the distinct impress of God’s own hand.

## CHAPTER V

### EXPULSION OF THE WESLEYS FROM THE PULPITS OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH, AND FORMATION OF THE UNITED SOCIETIES.

How was this ‘irregular’ course of action received by the Clergy of the Established Church, and what were the consequences? The immediate result was, ejection from the churches, and, in many instances, direct personal persecution. It has already been pointed out, how fine an opportunity was here given for making the Established Church thoroughly efficient by incorporating into it the new spiritual life and tireless vigour of these men of God; but the opportunity was lost; many of the best Churchmen, both lay and clerical, have since seen the error, and would have been glad to rectify it, but it was

too late. Many would now rejoice if some comprehensive scheme could be devised; and some efforts have been made in that direction, but in vain; the difficulties in the way are now too formidable to be overcome, and, as will be seen, *the third* stage of departure from the Established Church was consummated.

How short-sighted, as well as wicked, is man, when he seeks by his own contrivances, and by the use of unlawful means, to destroy the work of God! A great work of God had broken out; but the Clergy, instead of fostering it, sought, first by ejecting these Ministers from their pulpits, and afterwards by direct persecution, to destroy it. The result has proved how utterly they failed. The quotations given will show how strong and how tireless was the opposition of the Episcopal hierarchy. The first (from Dr. Smith) related to Charles Wesley.

“Charles Wesley, as already noticed, had accepted the curacy of Islington, but had entered on the duties of that office only by private arrangement with the Vicar, as the Bishop never gave his sanction to the appointment. The Churchwardens were soon offended with his ministrations, and were determined to get rid of him. At first they confined their opposition to insult, and met him in the vestry before the commencement of service, and requested a sight of the Bishop’s licence, which they knew he did not possess. He meekly endured this conduct. They then proceeded to the most abusive language, and told him the ‘he was full of the devil.’ Still the pious Minister proceeded on his way, ‘bearing ill, and doing well.’ These violent officials, however, were determined to expel the object of their dislike from the church; they accordingly employed men to take possession of the pulpit stairs, and to push him back when he attempted to ascend. Afterward, notwithstanding the appeals of gentlemen of the highest respectability, they themselves did this, in the face of the whole congregation. This violence being continued, the Vicar, who was a good man, but lacked firmness, gave way to the storm, and the case was laid before the Bishop of London, who justified the Churchwardens in the course they had taken. Charles Wesley had in consequence to retire from his curacy, and seek some other field of labour.”

These proceedings only demonstrated the intense enmity which actuated these opposers; but let the reader observe, they were not the ebullition of an ignorant mob, but were the acts of the “*Churchwardens*,” and the Vicar and Bishop, who should have protected him, declined so to do.

Before Whitefield went to America, he had been unboundedly popular; the churches at Bristol and other places were crowded; thousands hung upon his eloquence with delight, and almost with rapture. But no sooner had he returned, and entered upon his “irregular” course, than the churches were closed against him also. “He went to Bristol,” says Stevens, “the ancient city which had formerly received him with enthusiasm. The churches were open to him at his arrival, but in a fortnight every door was shut, except that of Newgate prison; and this, also, was soon after closed against him, by the authority of the Mayor. Nor far from Bristol lies Kingswood, a place which has since become noted in the history of Methodism. It was formerly a royal chase, but its forests had mostly fallen, and it was now a region of coal mines, and inhabited by a population which

is described as lawless and brutal, worse than heathens, and differing as much from the people of the surrounding country in dialect as in appearance. There was no church among them, and none nearer than the suburbs of Bristol, three or four miles distant. Whitefield found here an unquestionable justification of field preaching, and on Saturday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1739, he crossed the Rubicon, and virtually led the incipient Methodism across it, by the extraordinary irregularity of preaching in the open air. Standing upon a mount, he proclaimed the truth to about two hundred degraded and astonished colliers. He took courage from the reflection that he was imitating the example of Christ, who had a mountain for His pulpit, and the heavens for a sounding-board; and who, when His Gospel was refused by the Jews, sent His servants into the highways and hedges. 'Blessed be God,' he writes, that the ice is now broke, and I have now taken the field. Some may censure me, but is there not a cause? Pulpits are denied, and the poor colliers are ready to perish for lack of knowledge.'"

Posterity has endorsed his decision, admired his zeal, and applauded the results. In modern times *Bishops* and *Clergymen* have in some instances been *equally irregular*.

Mr. John Wesley was not to be more favoured. Having adopted the same course, he had to submit to similar treatment. After his return from Georgia, he says: "I was in haste to retire to Oxford, and bury myself in my beloved obscurity; but I was detained in London, week after week, by the Trustees for the colony of Georgia. In the mean time, I was continually importuned to preach in one and another church; and that not only morning, afternoon, and night, on Sunday, but on week-days also. As I was lately come from a far country, vast multitudes flocked together; but, in a short time, partly because of those unwieldy crowds, partly because of my unfashionable doctrine, I was excluded from one and another church, and, at length, shut out of all! Not daring to be silent, after a short struggle between honour and conscience, I made a virtue of necessity, and preached in the middle of Moorfields. Here were thousands upon thousands, abundantly more than any church could contain; and numbers among them who never went to any church or place of public worship at all. More and more of them were cut to the heart, and came to me all in tears, inquiring with the utmost eagerness, what they must do to be saved."

"Things were in this posture, when I was told I must preach no more in this, and this, and another church; the reason was usually added without reserve, 'Because you preach such doctrines.' So much the more those who could not hear me there flocked together when I was at any of the Societies; where I spoke more or less, though with much inconvenience, to as many as the room I was in would contain.

"But after a time, finding those rooms could not contain a tenth part of the people that were earnest to hear, I determined to do the same thing in England, which I had often done in a warmer climate; namely, when the house would not contain the congregation, to preach in the open air. This I accordingly did, first at Bristol, where the Society rooms were exceeding small, and at Kingswood, where we had no room at all; afterwards, in or near London.

“And I cannot say I have ever seen a more awful sight, than when, on Rose Green, or the top of Hannam Mount, some thousands of people were calmly joined together in solemn waiting upon God, while

‘They stood, and under open air adored  
The God who made both air, earth, heaven, and sky.’

And whether they were listening to His word with attention still as night, or were lifting up their voice in praise as the sound of many waters, many a time have I been constrained to say in my heart, ‘How dreadful is this place! This also ‘is not other than the house of God! This is the gate of heaven!’

“Be pleased to observe: (1.) That I was forbidden, as by a general consent, to preach in any church, (though not by any judicial sentence,) ‘for preaching such doctrine.’ This was the open avowed cause; there was at that time no other, either real or pretended, except that the people crowded so. (2.) That I had no desire or design to preach in the open air, till after this prohibition. (3.) That when I did, as it was no matter of choice, so neither of premeditation. There was no scheme at all previously formed, which was to be supported thereby; nor had I any other end in view than this,--to save as many souls as I could. (4) Field-preaching was therefore a sudden expedient, a thing submitted to, rather than chosen; and therefore submitted to, because I thought preaching even thus better than not preaching at all: First, in regard to my own soul, because, ‘a dispensation of the Gospel being committed to me, ‘I did not dare ‘not to preach the Gospel;’ Secondly, in regard to the souls of others, whom I everywhere saw ‘seeking death in the error of their life.’”

Thus were Wesley and his coadjutors ejected from the churches, and cast forth upon the world, which thenceforward became their “parish.” How cogent and how scriptural were the reasons which induced them thus to act! A dispensation of the Gospel was committed to them; and woe to them, if they preached not that Gospel! Mr. Watson’s eloquent summing up is as follows:

“That great public attention should be excited by these extraordinary and novel proceedings, and that the dignitaries of the Church, and the advocates of stillness and order, should take the alarm at them, as ‘doubting whereunto this thing might grow,’ were inevitable consequences. A doctrine so obsolete, that on its revival it was regarded as new and dangerous, was now publicly proclaimed as the doctrine of the Apostles and Reformers; the consciousness of the forgiveness of sins was professed by many, and enforced as the possible attainment of all; several Clergymen of talents and learning, which would have given influence to any cause, endued with mighty zeal, and with a restless activity, instead of settling in parishes, were preaching in various churches and private rooms, and to vast multitudes in the open air, alternately in the metropolis, and at Bristol, Oxford, and the interjacent places. They alarmed the careless, by bringing before them the solemnities of the last judgment; they explained the spirituality of that law upon which the self-righteous trusted for salvation, and convinced them that the justification of man was by the grace of God alone through faith; and they roused the dozing adherents of mere forms, by teaching, that true religion implies a change of the whole heart

wrought by the Holy Ghost. With equal zeal and earnestness, they checked the pruriency of the Calvinistic system, as held by many Dissenters, by insisting that the law which cannot justify was still the rule of life, and the standard of holiness to all true believers; and taught that mere doctrinal views of evangelical truth, however correct, were quite as vain and unprofitable as Pharisaism and formality, when made a substitute for vital faith, spirituality, and practical holiness. All this zeal was supported and made more noticeable by the moral elevation of their character. Their conduct was scrupulously hallowed; their spirit, gentle, tender, and sympathizing; their courage, bold and undaunted; their patience, proof against all reproach, hardships, persecutions; their charities to the poor abounded to the full extent of all their resources; their labours were wholly gratuitous; and their wonderful activity, and endurance of the fatigues of rapid traveling, seemed to destroy the distance of place, and to give them a sort of ubiquity in the vast circuit which they had then adopted as the field of their labours. For all these reasons they ‘were men to be wondered at,’ even in the infancy of their career; and as their ardour was increased by the effects which followed,—the conversion of great numbers to God, of which the most satisfactory evidence was afforded,—it disappointed those who anticipated that their zeal would soon cool, and that, ‘shorn of their strength,’ by opposition, reproach, and exhausting labours, they would become ‘like other men.’”

As time rolled on, we might have supposed that a change for the better would have taken place; but, instead of this, persecution became more intense and systematic, and continued, with more or less vigour, until the close of Wesley’s long and honoured career; so that one of the last draughts of suffering he had to drink was, to find the Bishops denying his people the benefits of the Toleration Act, and compelling them to have their places of worship licensed as Dissenting Meeting-houses. One of Wesley’s latest letters—a pathetic letter it is—refers to this subject. It is addressed to one of the Bishops, and is as follows:--

“My Lord,

“It may seem strange, that one who is not acquainted with your Lordship, should trouble you with a letter. But I am constrained to do it: I believe it is my duty both to God and your Lordship. And I must speak plain; having nothing to hope or fear in this world, which I am on the point of leaving.”

“The Methodists, in general, my Lord, are members of the Church of England. They hold all her doctrines, attend her service, and partake of her sacraments. They do not willingly do harm to any one, but do what good they can to all. To encourage each other herein, they frequently spend an hour together in prayer and mutual exhortation. Permit me then to ask. *Cui bono?* ‘For what reasonable end’ would your Lordship drive these people out of the Church? Are they not as quiet, as inoffensive, nay, as pious as any of their neighbours? Except, perhaps, here and there a hair-brained man, who knows not what he is about. Do you ask, ‘Who drives them out of the Church?’ Your Lordship does; and that in the most cruel manner; yea, and the most disingenuous manner. They desire a licence to worship God according to their own conscience. Your Lordship refuses it, and then punishes them for not having a license! So your Lordship leaves them only this

alternative, 'Leave the Church, or starve.' And is it a Christian, yea, a Protestant Bishop, that so persecutes his own flock? I say, *persecutes*; for it is persecution to all intents and purposes. You do not burn them, indeed, but you starve them. And how small is the difference! And your Lordship does this under colour of a vile, execrable law, not a whit better than that *De Hoeretico comburendo*. So persecution, which is banished out of France, is again countenanced in England!

"O my Lord, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for pity's sake, suffer the poor people to enjoy their religious, as well as civil liberty! I am on the brink of eternity! Perhaps so is your Lordship too! How soon may you also be called to give an account of your stewardship to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls! May he enable both you and me to do it with joy! So prays, My Lord,

"Your Lordship's dutiful Son and Servant."

As a writer in the "London Quarterly" observes, "The effect of the policy pursued in this case by those who represented the Church of England, was to force both Preachers and people to be licensed under the Toleration Act. Thus were Methodists driven to become, in legal construction, Protestant Nonconformists. After eighty years Churchmen are now seeking to reverse what was then done, not by Methodists, but by their predecessors."

But in South Africa ignorant natives are told that John Wesley was a Churchman, and that the Methodists are renegades; and thus, without any appeal, the whole of them are claimed as the rightful property of the Established Church. "When all this is borne in mind, and when it is also remembered that the Bishops and most of the Clergy repelled, or at least declined, the overtures of the Methodists from the first; that some of them insulted and drove away from the Lord's table, and sometimes even from their churches, both Preachers and people, not excepting the Wesleys themselves; that no such efforts as now, a century too late, are imagined and projected for including Methodism, with its itinerancy, and its living energy, within the pale of the Church of England, were made during Wesley's life, or were for a moment entertained, although they would have precisely coincided with Wesley's views: it will then be understood how ignorant as well as how unjust a thing it is, how childish as well as narrow and bigoted it must appear to Wesleyans, to argue that, as true followers of John Wesley, the Methodists of today are bound to return to the Established Church! Such arguments can only excite the wonder and the pity of many Methodists. They may have influence with the feeble-minded and ill-informed, with a few dependent, depressed and ignorant rustics, or with effeminate aspirants for a certain social recognition, which they have not character enough otherwise to obtain, but which, it is imagined, the passport of the Clergy can confer; but they can never make an impression on the body and soul of Methodism."\* (\* "London Quarterly Review," 1867, p. 185)

#### FORMATION OF THE UNITED SOCIETIES

Another step of departure from the Established Church was, the formation of the United Societies. The persons awakened and reformed by the powerful preaching of Wesley and

his fellow labourers were gathered and joined in “Classes,” that they might be preserved. The foundation of Classes and the organization of a “Society” did not necessarily involve departure from the Established Church; nor was it designed to lead to this result by Wesley. His design was, that it should be a Society within the Church, for the purpose of promoting the spiritual life of that Church; an “*imperium in imperio*.” In this, he looked not into the future, neither did he calculate future contingent consequences. What urged him was, that it was a *felt want*, and was calculated to advance the spiritual prosperity of those concerned. The want had been created by the earnest preaching of these zealous men; and, like a wise master-builder, he looked out for such agency as the want demanded. Hence the origin of Class Leaders and Class Meetings. The origin of Class Meetings is thus given by John Wesley himself: “In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to me in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did one or two more the next day) that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them, (for their number increased daily,) I gave those advices, from time to time, which I judged most needful for them; and we always concluded our meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

“This was the rise of the United Society, first in London, and then in other places. Such a Society is no other than a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another to love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.”

The office of Class Leader arose from the inability of Mr. Wesley to meet personally all those anxious inquirers who sought spiritual advice and counsel. He therefore selected and appointed one of the most spiritual and well informed persons, to meet (about) twelve others, and to take the spiritual oversight of them. This office was not confined to men, but females of equal qualification were alike eligible for it. Thus was created an order of officers in the infant Church, which has not only continued to the present day, but has been one great cause of the progress, stability, and success of Methodism. It is the business of the Leader, as it is stated in the “Rules of the Society,”

“1. To see each person in his Class, once a week at least, in order to inquire how their souls prosper;

“To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require;

“To receive what they are willing to give towards the support of the Gospel:

“II. To meet the Ministers and Stewards of the Society once a week, in order



“To inform the Minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reprov'd;

“To pay to the Stewards what they have received of their several Classes in the week preceding; and

“To show their account of what each person has contributed.

“4. There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these Societies, namely, a ‘a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.’ But wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, by, “ &c.

Then follow the proofs which should be given by all who have this desire; viz., on the one hand, by refraining from all things opposed to the Gospel; and on the other, by performing all Christian duties. These plain and scriptural “Rules” close with the following paragraph:

“These are the General Rules of our Societies; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in His written word, the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know His Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be made known unto them who watch over that soul, as they that must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways: we will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.”

There is a beautiful simplicity and adaptation about the whole of this arrangement,-- nothing foreign, nothing strained,--nothing far-fetched; no cumbrous round of duties or ceremonies, on the one hand; no indifferent neglect, on the other; no wild extravagance of a heated imagination; no mystery; no asceticism. The whole is simple, natural, scriptural. The great qualification of admission into the Society is, “a desire to flee from the wrath to come.” Where this exists, it will be demonstrated by its natural and legitimate fruits. Where the fruits do not follow, there is demonstrative proof that the desire does not exist. Some have thought this qualification insufficient. It might be so, were not the means of removal from the Society equally simple. “If there be any among us who observe them not,” &c., they have “no more place among us.”

The token of membership is a quarterly ticket, issued by the Minister when he meets the Classes at the end of each quarter. If any just cause of complaint exists against any person, at the renewal of the quarterly tickets, the offending person is excluded from membership by his ticket being withheld, and is thereby disqualified from all other Church privileges.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable things connected with these terms of membership is, their extreme *liberality*. There is no other condition whatever imposed than that of a

“desire to flee from the wrath to come.” And this was a point to which Wesley himself often called attention. As Dr. Stevens says,

“His only restriction on opinions in his Societies was, that they should not be obtruded for discussion or wrangling in their devotional meetings; not the creed of a man, but his moral conduct respecting it, was a question of discipline with primitive Methodism. The possible results of such liberality were once discussed in the Conference. Wesley conclusively determined the debate by remarking: ‘I have no more right to object to a man for holding a different opinion from me, than I have to differ with a man because he wears a wig and I wear my own hair; but if he takes his wig off, and begins to shake the powder about my eyes, I shall consider it my duty to get quit of him as soon as possible.’

“Is a man,’ he writes, ‘a believer in Jesus Christ, and is his life suitable to his profession? Are not only the main, but the sole inquiries I make in order to his admission into our Society.’”

### THE CONNEXIONAL PRINCIPLE

One of the peculiarities of Methodism is what is called “the Connexional principle.” In this respect it differs from the order and organization of other Churches, except perhaps the Moravian, from which probably Mr. Wesley first derived the idea, and laid down the platform of the Connexion. According to this principle, wherever a Society was formed, whether composed of few or of many members, in England or in any other part of the world, it became united firmly with all who acknowledged Mr. Wesley as their head, and, since his death, with all the Societies under the direction of the British Conference.

The United Societies are consequently an association of Christian men, who from choice, without coercion of any kind, determine to adopt these Rules, be bound by these laws, submit to this discipline; acknowledge the same pastorate, and labour to carry out the same designs. By this means, not only is a powerful agency exerted to preserve and control what may have been attained and realized, but a might power is brought into force, by which aggressive action may be taken upon the world. The strong help the weak, and the weak are made strong by the support derived. When needful, the combined force of the whole can be brought to bear upon any particular subject, and promote the common cause. This is one reason why Methodism has made such rapid progress in the world.

The only qualified exceptions to this rule at the present time are, the Methodist Episcopal Church, of America, and the affiliated Conferences in other countries, as the result of missionary labours and enterprise. But even with these the same principle prevails, with varied adaptation to the peculiar state and wants of the country in which each Conference is held.

That particular action which enabled Mr. Wesley and his successors to adopt and carry out the Connexional principle was, the quarterly visitation of the Classes,--first by Mr. Wesley himself, and afterwards by his instruments,--at which the “ticket” of membership

was given, by which the person receiving it became a member of the Society, and personally identified with it. As Dr. Smith observes, “This arrangement, valuable and excellent in itself, led to another important usage. Wesley, giving an account of it, says, ‘As the Society increased, I found it required still greater care to separate the precious from the vile. In order to this I determined, at least once in three months, to talk with every member myself, and to inquire at their own mouths, as well as of their Leaders and neighbours, whether they grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ To each of the persons thus spoken to, whose conduct was satisfactory, Wesley gave a ticket on which he wrote the member’s name. This ticket enabled the person to obtain anywhere the privilege of being a member, and was, says Wesley, ‘just of the same force as the commendatory letters mentioned by the Apostle.’”

This usage, established by Wesley, and strictly adhered to ever since, involved more than was at first contemplated. The Connexion is now one vast brotherhood throughout the world, with the Conference at its head.

The manner in which Mr. Wesley personally visited every Society, and examined every member, for many years, is truly marvelous. His traveling, his preaching, his publication of books, &c., were something extraordinary; but when there were added to these the visitation of the Classes, and the personal examination of each member, the amount of work done becomes astounding, and it appears incredible that any one man should accomplish so much. “The steady and zealous attention of Wesley to the character, conduct, and spiritual state of the individual members of his Societies is truly remarkable. In 1745 he carefully examined the Society in London one by one, and wrote a list of the whole with his own hand, numbered from 1 to 2008. In 1746 he repeated this operation, and wrote another list, in which the number was reduced to 1939.”

Wesley having secured the personal inspection of the members, and being satisfied of their piety and godly lives, the various officers of the Connexion were selected and appointed. First, Class Leaders: Second, Lay Preachers: Third, Itinerant Preacher: Fourth, Stewards, to take charge of the temporal affairs of the Church. The various Church courts followed in order, as will be seen in another place: there was, first, the *Quarterly Meeting*, which was and is the meeting of the various officers in each Circuit, for the transaction of Circuit business. This embraces every place and Society in that Circuit, thus extending the family or Connexional range. There is, next, the *District Meeting*, which includes a certain number of Circuits, massed together within a specified district of country. The formation, however, of the District is purely a Methodistical arrangement, having no reference whatever to the divisions of England into counties, but made solely for the convenience and prosperity of the work. There is, lastly, the *Conference*, which includes all the Districts in the kingdom, and extends its ample range and influence over the whole.

Truly this organization is wonderfully simple, beautiful, and effective. The machine is complete, symmetrical, and easily worked. There is the centre spring and power, first in Mr. Wesley, and afterwards in the Conference; and this power is felt through the whole of the ramifications; all the wheels, and joints, and pulleys, and pins, and shafts, and rods,

performing their allotted part, and ministering to the efficiency of the whole. Yes, and all this without previous design and arrangement, so far as Mr. Wesley and his successors were concerned. Each part arose, or was called for, or was taken hold upon, to meet some emergency, some felt want. Hence, nothing is cumbrous, nothing is superfluous, nothing inefficient. Sometimes there has been a little jar and a slight breakage, which has thrown a few members and Ministers off; but the breakage has soon been repaired, and the machine has gone on, often with greater harmony and power than before.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE COMMENCEMENT OF LAY PREACHING, AND ORDINATION OF THE FIRST REGULAR MINISTERS

The establishment of lay preaching was an important step in advancing separation from the Established Church. This serious innovation greatly shocked Wesley's High Church prejudices, and required a marked interposition of God's providence to enable him to enter upon its organization. He had not contemplated such a result to his labours, and evidently was not prepared for it. His brother Charles was also strongly opposed to it. But in this, as in other things, let God make the path plain, and the consequences are not regarded by him. That the will of God was clearly made known, the facts will prove. Happily for John Wesley and the world, his devoted and exemplary mother was at hand, to render that advice at this critical moment which was so greatly needed. How does God take care of His own cause, and provide for unforeseen consequences!

"Several Preachers," says the Rev. Richard Watson, "were now employed by Mr. Wesley to assist in the growing work, which already had swelled beyond even his and his brother's active powers suitably to supply with the ministration of the word of God. Mr. Charles Wesley had discouraged this from the beginning, and even he himself hesitated; but, with John, the promotion of religion was the first concern, and Church order the second, although inferior in consideration to that only. With Charles these views were often reversed. Mr. Wesley, in the year 1741, had to caution his brother against joining the Moravians, after the example of Mr. Gambold, to which he was at that time inclined; and adds, 'I am not clear, that brother Maxfield should not expound at Greyhound Lane, nor can I as yet do without him. Our Clergymen have miscarried full as much as the laymen; [and that the Moravians are other than laymen, I know not.]' Mr. Maxfield's preaching had the strong sanction of the Countess of Huntingdon; but so little of design, with reference to the forming of a sect, had Mr. Wesley, in the employment of Mr. Maxfield, that, in his own absence from London, he had only authorized him to pray with the Society, and to advise them as might be needful; and upon his beginning to preach, he hastened back to silence him. On this his mother addressed him: 'John, you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of favouring readily any thing of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man; for he is as surely called of God to preach, as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself.' He took this advice, and could not venture to forbid him.

“His defence of himself on this point we may pronounce irrefutable; and it turns upon the disappointment of his hopes, that the parochial Clergy would take the charge of those who, in different places, had been brought to God by his ministry, and that of his fellow-labourers.

“‘It pleased God,’ says Mr. Wesley, ‘by two or three Ministers of the Church of England, to call many sinners to repentance, who, in several parts, were undeniably turned from a course of sin to a course of holiness.

“‘The Ministers of the places where this was done ought to have received those Ministers with open arms; and to have taken those persons who had just begun to serve God, into their particular care; watching over them in tender love, lest they should fall back into the snare of the devil.

“‘Instead of this, the greater part spoke of those Ministers, as if the devil, not God, had sent them. Some repelled them from the Lord’s table; others stirred up the people against them, representing them, even in their public discourses, as fellows not fit to live; Papists, heretics, traitors; conspirators against their King and country.

“‘And how did they watch over the sinners lately reformed? Even as a leopard watcheth over his prey. They drove some of them from the Lord’s table; to which, till now, they had no desire to approach. They preached all manner of evil concerning them, openly cursing them in the name of the Lord. They turned many out of their work, persuaded others to do so too, and harassed them in all manner of ways.

“‘The event was, that some were wearied out, and so turned back to the vomit again: and then these good Pastors gloried over them, and endeavoured to shake others by their example.

“‘When the Ministers, by whom God had helped them before, came again to those places, great part of their work was to begin again, if it could be begun again; but the relapsers were often so hardened in sin, that no impression could be made upon them.

“‘What could they do in a case of so extreme necessity, where so many souls lay at stake?

“‘No Clergyman would assist at all. The expedient that remained was, to find some one among themselves who was upright of heart, and of sound judgment in the things of God; and to desire him to meet the rest as often as he could, in order to confirm them, as he was able, in the ways of God, either by reading to them, or by prayer, or by exhortation.’

“This statement may indeed be considered as affording the key to all that which, with respect to Church order, may be called irregularity in Mr. Wesley’s future proceedings. God had given him large fruits of his ministry in various places; when he was absent from them, the people were ‘as sheep having no shepherd,’ or were rather persecuted by their natural Pastors, the Clergy; he was reduced, therefore, to the necessity of leaving them without religious care, or of providing it for them. He wisely chose the latter; but,

true to his own principles, and even prejudices, he carried this no farther than the necessity of the case; the hours of service were in no instance to interfere with those of the Establishment, and at the parish church the members were exhorted to communicate. Thus a religious society was raised up within the national Church, and with this anomaly, that, as to all its interior arrangements as a society, it was independent of the ecclesiastical authority of that Church. The irregularity was, in principle, as great when the first step was taken as at any future time. It was a form of practical and partial separation, though not of theoretical dissent; but it arose out of a moral necessity, and existed for some years in such a state, that, had the Clergy been disposed to co-operate in this evident revival and spread of true religion, and had the heads of the Church been willing to sanction itinerant labours among its Ministers, and private religious meetings among the serious part of the people for mutual edification, the great body of Methodists might have been retained in communion with the Church of England.”\*

How cautiously does Wesley proceed, whilst he is staggered at what is going on around him! In “The Large Minutes” he gives this brief account of the origin of this assistance in preaching: “After a time a young man named Thomas Maxfield came and desired to help me as a son in the Gospel: soon after came a second, Thomas Richards: and then a third, Thomas Westell. These severally desired to serve me as sons, and to labour when and where I should direct.”

It would be agreeable to the writer to supply here some details respecting these men and their early labours; but want of space will not allow him to do so. He must therefore refer the reader to Jackson’s “Lives of Early Methodist Preachers,” and to Dr. Smith’s and Dr. Stevens’ Histories of Methodism; only stating in general, that they were men truly converted to God; that they were filled with loving zeal for the souls of men, and were willing to labour and suffer for their salvation. Mr. Jackson, in his “Centenary” volume, thus describes them:

“Some of Mr. Wesley’s early Preachers were men of strong intellect, and attained to considerable eminence in sacred scholarship. Thomas Olivers, originally a shoemaker and a young man of profligate habits, became not only an excellent Christian, but an able and powerful Preacher. He wrote several polemical tracts, which reflect great credit upon his theological attainments, and his ability as a reasoner. The fine hymns, beginning,

‘Lo, He comes, with clouds descending,

and

‘The God of Abraham praise,’

were both his composition; and also the beautiful and appropriate tune which is set to the first of them in Mr. Wesley’s ‘Sacred Harmony.’ Thomas Walsh, Mr. Wesley declares to have been the best biblical scholar with whom he was ever acquainted. Though he died at the early age of twenty-eight, yet, says Mr. Wesley, ‘if he was questioned concerning any

Hebrew word in the Old, or any Greek word in the New, Testament, he would tell, after a little pause, not only how often the one or the other occurred in the Bible, but also what it meant in every place. Such a master of biblic knowledge I never saw before, and never expect to see again.' Others of them were well acquainted with the English Scriptures, with Christian theology, and especially with the nature of personal religion; and that they were able and effective Preachers, is attested by the fruit of their labours in every part of the land. 'In one thing which they profess to know,' says Mr. Wesley, 'they are not ignorant men. I trust there is not one of them who is not able to go through such an examination, in substantial, practical, experimental diversity, as a few of our candidates for holy orders, even in the University (I speak it with sorrow and shame, and in tender love,) are able to do. But O, what manner of examination do most of those candidates go through! And what proof are the testimonials commonly brought, (as solemn as the form is wherein they run,) either of their piety or knowledge, to whom are entrusted those sheep which God hath purchased with His own blood!'"

Thus was Mr. Wesley borne onward by a tide of events which was resistless. The first departure from the regular order of the Church hierarchy involved in its consequences the raising up of a Ministry which now numbers its thousands, who have proclaimed Divine and saving truth to millions of the human race; and if peopling heaven with a multitude of redeemed and happy souls, and filling the Church on earth with tens of thousands of devoted and consistent Christians, by any signs of a true scriptural Minister, then may Wesleyan Ministers say, "The seals of our Apostleship are ye in the Lord." This Ministry has extended its operations to distant lands, and in many languages of the Babel world does it now show forth the unsearchable riches of Christ. These lines are written by one of these men on one of the many Missions in the towns and among the native tribes of South Africa.

## ORDINATION

I give prominence to this subject for two reasons. *First*, because of its own intrinsic importance; *second*, because of the pertinacity with which it was and still is disputed and rejected by many of the adherents of the Established Church in England, and by the *Episcopal (not established)* Churches in the Colonies. I have had ample proof of what is contained in the following quotations. "the persistent misrepresentations of him (Wesley) on this point are astonishing. The Rev. Edmund Sydney ('Life of Walker of Truro,' p. 260) says, that when he wanted ordained Preachers for America, he, of a sudden, *in his old age*, found out, by Lord King's account of the primitive Church, that Bishops and Presbyters were of the same order!' This inexcusable violation of historical truth is common in the writings of Churchmen against Methodism."

So long as these misstatements came only before educated Englishmen, the consequences were not serious; but when they are made use of to influence natives, just emerging from heathenism, and unable to understand the real merits of the case, it is far otherwise, and the facts require to be placed in the most clear and convincing light possible.

Dr. Smith thus fairly introduces the subject: "It is a remarkable fact, that as, at the English Conference this year, the Deed of Declaration, which gave consistency and permanence to Methodism in Britain, was announced as enrolled and in operation; so, at the same assembly of his Preachers, Wesley determined upon carrying out the measure which, under God, has been the means of raising the Methodist Societies in America into the state and condition of a Christian Church.

"There is scarcely any action which occurred in the long and eventful life of the founder of Methodism of more intrinsic importance than that which effected this great object, and perhaps not one which has been more fiercely and foully censured. It is necessary, therefore, to give a clear and faithful account of the whole proceeding.

"Notwithstanding the early zeal of Wesley for Church order, and his continued adherence to the National Establishment, he had been convinced that Bishops and Presbyters are essentially of the same order in the Christian Church, and consequently that whatever religious right or power is inherent in one, is equally possessed by the other; and therefore that both are equally authorized to ordain, or set apart, suitable persons for the office of the Christian ministry.

"It was not, therefore, from any sense of inability that Wesley allowed his Preachers in England to remain in the position of laymen, and the great majority of his Societies to continue without the administration of the sacraments in their own places of worship. He fully believed that he possessed the scriptural power and right to supply all this want,--to place his Societies everywhere in the position of Churches, and himself in the character of a scriptural Bishop over the largest spiritual flock in the country. And it would be well if those who sneer at the conscientiousness of this great and good man, and dilate on his ambition and love of power, would trouble themselves to reconcile these ascriptions of character with his conduct in this respect. Why did not Wesley take this course? Because he considered the orders of ministry in the Established Church reasonable and useful as human arrangements; and because he felt conscientiously bound to remain all his life in communion with this Church, and, as far as in him lay, to keep his people in the same path. To secure this object, he subjected himself and them to violent persecution,--from which the plea of Dissent would have given full protection,--and retained his Societies in a disadvantageous and anomalous position. And, so long as the American colonies were subject to the British Government, he pursued a similar course in that country."

Accordingly Mr. Wesley and Dr. Coke, assisted by Mr. Creighton, all three being by ordination Presbyters of the Church of England, ordained Mr. Richard Whatcoat and Mr. Thomas Vasey Presbyters to the Wesleyan Church in America. Mr. Wesley afterwards ordained Dr. Coke as Superintendent, giving him letters of ordination under his own hand and seal. On a subject of so much importance, and one against which so much opposition has been brought, Mr. Wesley ought to be heard for himself. In the following letter, which Dr. Coke was to take with him to America, and have printed and circulated on his arrival there, he states the whole subject in a very brief and lucid manner.

"Bristol, *September 10<sup>th</sup>*, 1784



“To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our other Brethren in North America.

“By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from their mother country, and erected into independent States. The English Government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the States of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the Congress, partly by the Provincial Assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation, some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice; and, in compliance with their desire, I have drawn up a little sketch.

“Lord King’s account of the Primitive Church convinced me, many years ago, that Bishops and Presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise this right by ordaining part of our Travelling Preachers. But I have still refused, not only for peace sake, but because I was determined as little as possible to violate the established order of the National Church, to which I belonged.

“But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are Bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none. Neither any parish Ministers. So that, for some hundreds of miles together, there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord’s Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man’s right, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.

“I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint Superintendents over our brethren in North America; as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as Elders among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord’s Supper. And I have prepared a Liturgy, little different from that of the Church of England, (I think the best constituted national Church in the world.) which I advise all the Travelling Preachers to use on the Lord’s day in all the congregations, reading the Litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the Elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord’s day.

“If any one will point out a more rational and scriptural way of feeding and guiding these poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present, I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

“It has, indeed, been proposed to desire the English Bishops to ordain a part of our Preachers for America. But to this I object, 1. I desired the Bishop of London to ordain only one, but could not prevail. 2. If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay. 3. If they would ordain them *now*, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us! 4. As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the State and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and primitive Church. And we

judge it best, that they should stand fast in that liberty, wherewith God has so strangely made them free.

“John Wesley”

As in the early Church in Alexandria Presbyters ordained Bishops, so Mr. Wesley believed that he and other Presbyters of the Church of England had power to ordain not only Presbyters, but even Bishops for America. He accordingly used this power; the result of which is, that the Methodist Church in America, has been Episcopal ever since; Philip Asbury being the first Bishop ordained by Dr. Coke. Dr. Stevens thus further states the case:--“It is another of the great providential facts of his history, that the same year which thus gave a constitutional security to Methodism in Great Britain, was signalized by its Episcopal organization in America; a measure which, by its consequences, may well be ranked among the most important events of Wesley’s important life. Here again did he follow, with simple wisdom, the guidance of that Divine Providence, the recognition of which, in the affairs of men, and especially in the affairs of the Church, was the crowning maxim of his philosophy and the crowning fact of his policy. He had been providentially preparing for this new and momentous exigency by that gradual development of his personal opinions, which we have already traced. Bigoted even, as a High Churchman, at the beginning of his career, we have seen him, year after year, reaching more liberal views of ecclesiastical policy. Nearly forty years before his ordinations for America, he had, after reading Lord King’s ‘Primitive Church,’ renounced the opinion that a distinction of order, rather than of office, existed between Bishops and Presbyters. Fifteen years later he denied the necessity, though not the expediency, of Episcopal ordination. Bishop Stillingfleet had convinced him that it was ‘an entire mistake, that none but Episcopal ordination was valid.’ Henceforth he held that Presbyters and Bishops, identical in order, differing only in office, had essentially the same right of ordination. It was not possible for a man like Wesley, keen, quick, fearless, and candid, to remain long in any ecclesiastical prejudice, now that he was on this track of progressive opinions. He soon broke away from all other regard for questions of Church government than that of scriptural expediency. And as early as 1756, when in his maturest intellectual vigour, he declares: ‘As to my own judgment, I still believe the Episcopal form of Church government to be scriptural and apostolical; I mean, well agreeing with the practice and writings of the Apostles; but that it is prescribed in Scripture I do not believe. This opinion, which I once zealously espoused, I have been heartily ashamed of ever since I read Bishop Stillingfleet’s “Irenicum.” I think he has unanswerably proved that “neither Christ nor His Apostles prescribe any particular form of Church government, and that the plea of Divine right for diocesan episcopacy was never heard of in the Primitive Church.””

The subject is thus settled, so far as America is concerned; but how are Scotland and England to be dealt with? In answering this question, it will be needful to anticipate dates and events somewhat; but it is better to do this than to break the course of the narrative.

The claims of Scotland were first met. At the Conference of 1785, only one year after the provision made for America, Ministers were ordained for Scotland. As Dr. Smith writes,

“Wesley proceeded to provide, as far as circumstances permitted, for the spiritual wants of his people. He accordingly informs us in his ‘Journal’ under this date, that, ‘having with a few select friends weighed the matter thoroughly, I yielded to their judgment, and set apart three of our well tried Preachers, John Pawson, Thomas Hanby, and Joseph Taylor, to minister in Scotland; and I trust God will bless their ministrations, and show that He has sent them. On Wednesday our peaceful Conference ended, the God of power having presided over all our consultations.’ The evident object of these ordinations was to enable Methodist Preachers to administer the sacraments in all those places in which the Church of England had no *status*. America had been provided for at the preceding Conference; the wants of Scotland were now met.”

Having proceeded so far, Wesley found it difficult to stop; the more so, as the state of things in England had become perplexing and painful. Large numbers of his people became so utterly dissociated from the State Church, that they mingled but little in its ordinances; many of them, not at all. Indeed, although he persevered with so much pertinacity in urging them to attend church as he did himself, in many instances he was so humbled and ashamed at the manner in which the services were conducted, that he could not conscientiously urge his people to continue their attendance. Many of them had been baptized by himself, and by other Church Ministers who had laboured with him; and these had scarcely been in a church at all; so that, to a great extent, those who adhered to him had no opportunity of receiving the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Thus the want became so pressing, and the cry so loud and long, that he at length yielded; and, being assisted by two other Church Ministers, ordained Messrs. Mather, Rankin, and Moore. “Besides these regulations which appear in the ‘Minutes,’ it is known that on this occasion Wesley, assisted by the Rev. J. Creighton and the Rev. Peard Dickenson, set apart and ordained, by imposition of hands and prayer, Alexander Mather, Thomas Rankin, and Henry Moore, for the service of the Church in England. Mr. Mather was afterwards ordained Bishop, or Superintendent. Yet, even in this innovation on the order of the Church of England, Wesley gave clear proof that he was influenced solely by what he regarded as the urgent demands of the cause of God. For, whilst making these appointments, he earnestly advised the persons so ordained, ‘that, according to his example, they should continue united to the Established Church, so far as the blessed work in which they were engaged would permit.’”

His brother and Mr. Whitehead severely condemned these measures, as completing the separation from the Established Church: for, although Mr. Wesley wished the men thus ordained to continue as closely united to the Church as they could, they could actually do so only in name and appearance. Either their ordination was a valid ordination, or it was not: all the parties agreed that it was a scriptural ordination. This ordination was effected in entire separation from the Established Church; it had no connexion with it in any way farther than this, that the men who performed it were ordained Ministers of that Church. How then it could be less than giving a separate, independent, ecclesiastical status to these men, it is difficult to conceive. The following remarks from Dr. Rigg’s “Essays for the Times” may fittingly close this chapter:

“He was persuaded that it was not his vocation to lead away a separation, or fully to organize an independent Church. In his lifetime at least, he trusted to be able to prevent such a consummation. He ordained Ministers to give the sacraments in different parts of England, as well as in Scotland and America, that he might thus still the just outcry of the people whom the parish Clergy drove from the Lord’s table, or who could not receive the communion from the hands of openly immoral ‘Priests.’ By this measure he put off the inevitable day of avowed separation. But he only put it off. He was even in postponing it educating both the people and their Preachers for the state of separation, and the mutual relations which that state would involve. No doubt he saw this. But his plan through life had been to trust and follow Providence, not anticipating troubles before the time, nor allowing himself to be deterred by probably consequences, by difficulties and complications looming in the future, from doing what he felt to be right and needful for the time present. He trusted to Providence the future of the people whom he had been the instrument of raising up. Was there not a Conference of Preachers? Were there not among them men of counsel and might? Had they not before their eyes the precedent of an independent and organized Methodism in America? Was not Dr. Coke, who had acted in America as ‘Superintendent,’ a member of the British Conference? And was there not the same God to guide the Preachers in Conference, as there had been to guide him?”

In treating the subject of the ordination of Wesley’s Itinerant Preachers in this place, the order of *Circuits* has been considerably anticipated; but the writer thought the order of *subjects* more important than the undisturbed record of dates, as by this means the rise of Lay Preachers, the gradual development of Itinerant Preachers, and ultimately the establishment of a regularly ordained Ministry follow each other in proper succession; the reader’s attention not being diverted by the introduction of other subjects, nor having again to take up that which had partially passed from the mind.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FIRST CONFERENCE (1744); AND THE CONFERENCE OF 1769

Having, in the last chapter, traced the institution of the regular Ministry from its beginning, I shall devote my next historic notes to the basis upon which the government of the Methodist Church rests. This consists in the establishment of the *Annual Conference*, which became the conscious and governing power in the Connexion, and in its present matured and permanent form gives separate and independent existence to the Wesleyan Church. The first Conference was held in London, beginning on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, 1744. Matters of great moment, relating to the wonderful work already accomplished and the best methods to be adopted in the future, rendered the Conference necessary. Some of these stirring events are thus recorded by Dr. Stevens:

“The year 1744 was to be signalized in the history of Methodism not only by the first session of the Wesleyan Conference, but by formidable trials. Before the Conference Wesley made rapid excursions into various parts of England and Wales. The country was in general commotion, occasioned by threatened invasions from France and Spain, and by

the movements of the Scotch Pretender. Reports were rife that the Methodist Preachers were in collusion with the Papal Stuart. All sorts of calumnies against Wesley flew over the land. He had been seen with the Pretender in France; had been taken up for high treason, and was at last safe in prison awaiting his merited doom. He was a Jesuit, and kept Roman Priests in his house at London. He was an agent of Spain, whence he had received large remittances, in order to raise a body of twenty thousand men to aid the expected Spanish invasion. He was an Anabaptist; a Quaker; and had been prosecuted for unlawfully selling gin; had hanged himself; and, at any rate, was not the genuine John Wesley, for it was known that the latter was dead and buried. That he was a disguised Papist, and an agent for the Pretender, was the favourite slander; and when a proclamation was made requiring all Roman Catholics to leave London, he staid a week in the city to refute the report. He was summoned by the Justices of Surrey to appear before their court, and required to take the oath of allegiance to the King, and to sign the Declaration against Popery. Charles Wesley was actually indicted before the Magistrates in Yorkshire, because in a public prayer he had besought God to ‘call home His banished ones.’ This, it was insisted, meant the House of the Stuarts; and he had to explain, at the tribunal, the purely spiritual meaning of the phrase, before he was acquitted.”

Persecution of the most violent kind now raged throughout the land, and the Methodists had for a time the honour of being the “sect everywhere spoken against.” (Acts xxviii.23.) Mobs, roused to fury, and in many places led on by the Episcopal Clergy, resorted to every kind of violence, in order to drive away or destroy the hated messengers of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time many members of the Society were rudely repelled from the Table of the Lord, and were in very deed treated as “the filth and offscouring of all things.”

The reader will carefully note that the Conference did not take its origin from any preconceived notion or the working out of any previously arranged plan; but was, like all other parts of the Wesleyan economy, the creation of circumstances,--a necessity arising out of the development of the work, and the need for combined action in the future. Thus Dr. Stevens again writes, speaking of harassing and revolting persecution:

“It is not surprising that the scholarly mind of Wesley sometimes revolted from such scenes. ‘I found,’ he writes, ‘a natural wish, O for ease and a resting-place! Not yet, but eternity is at hand.’ Amid these very agitations he was planning for a still more energetic prosecution of the great work which was manifestly henceforth to occupy his life. He wrote letters to several Clergymen, and to his lay assistants, inviting them to meet him in London, and to give him ‘their advice respecting the best method of carrying on the work of God.’ And thus was called together the *first Methodist Conference*, on Monday, the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, 1744. It was held in the Foundry, London. On the preceding day the regular Clergymen and lay Preachers who had responded to the call took the Lord’s Supper together. On the morning of the first session Charles Wesley preached before them. Besides the Wesleys there were present four ordained Ministers of the Church of England: John Hodges, Rector of Wenvo, Wales, a friend and co-labourer of the Wesleys in the Principality, who not only opened his own pulpit to them, but accompanied them in their different routes and out-door preaching; Henry Piers, the Vicar of Bexley, a convert

of Charles Wesley, and whose pulpit and home were ever open to him and his brother; Samuel Taylor, Vicar of Quinton, whose church the Wesleys always occupied when passing through that parish, and who himself was known as an itinerant evangelist; and John Meriton, a Clergyman from the Isle of Man, who itinerated extensively in both England and Ireland. It has usually been supposed that these six regular Clergymen composed the first Wesleyan Conference. There were present, however, from among the Lay Preachers, Thomas Maxfield, Thomas Richards, John Bennet, and John Downes.

“The Conference being opened, regulations were immediately adopted for its own government. They were marked by the simplicity and purely evangelical character with which the Methodist movement had thus far been characterized, and also by that charitable freedom of opinion which it has ever since been at least an indirect tendency of Methodism to promote. ‘It is desired,’ said these good men, ‘that everything he considered as in the immediate presence of God, that we may meet with a single eye, and as little children who have everything to learn; that every point may be examined from the foundation; that every person may speak freely what is in his heart, and that every question proposed may be fully debated and “bolted to the bran.”’ It was a question formally proposed, ‘How far does each agree to submit to the unanimous judgment of the rest?’ The answer is worthy of perpetual remembrance. ‘In speculative things each can only submit so far as his judgment shall be convinced; in every practical point, so far as we can, without wounding our several consciences.’ Should they be fearful, it was asked, of thoroughly debating every question which might arise? ‘What are we afraid of? Of overturning our first principles? If they are false, the sooner they are overturned the better. If they are true, they will bear the strictest examination. Let us all pray for a willingness to receive light to know every doctrine whether it be of God.’

“Having settled its own regulations, the Conference suspended its business for an interval of prayer, after which it proceeded to consider, first, What to teach; second, What to do, or how to regulate the doctrine, discipline, and practice of the Ministry and the Society. These propositions comprehended the scope of its further deliberations. The first two days were spent in discussions of the theology necessary to be maintained in their preaching; and the whole record of the debate vindicates the representation already made of the disposition of the Methodist founders to avoid unnecessary dogmatics, by confining their discussions to those vital truths which appertain to personal religion. Repentance, Faith, Justification, Sanctification, the Witness of the Spirit, were defined with precision. No other tenets were discussed except as they were directly related to these.

“On the third, fourth, and fifth days, questions of discipline and methods of preaching were examined. The relations of the Methodist Societies to the Church of England were considered. Secession from the Establishment was discountenanced, but evidence was given that Wesley’s opinions of ‘Church order’ had already undergone a liberal improvement....

“On Friday the little band dispersed, to proclaim again their message through the country. They made no provision for future sessions; they apparently had no definite conceptions

of the great work in which they found themselves involved, except the suggestion of their spiritual faith, that God would not allow it to come to nought without first morally renovating the Churches of the land. Any organic preparations for its future course would probably have interfered with the freedom and efficiency of its development. History teaches that men raised up for great events are usually endowed with wisdom and energy for their actual circumstances, and seldom effect momentous changes on hypothetical schemes; and that even the constitutions of states are best when they arise from gradual growths. Great men are God's special agents, and they are not only good, but great, in proportion as they are co-workers together with Him, using to the utmost their present resources, and trusting the results to His foreseeing wisdom. Such an anticipation of the result as might fit them intellectually to forecast it, might unfit them morally to achieve it. We behold with admiration the prodigious agency of Luther in the modern progress of the world, but we can hardly conceive that he could have anticipated it without being thereby morally disqualified for it. Most of the practical peculiarities of Methodism would have been pronounced impracticable if suggested before the exigencies which originated them. To have supposed that hundreds of thousands of the common people could be gathered, and kept from year to year, in weekly Class-meetings, for direct conversation and inquisition respecting their personal religious experience, and that such a fact should become the basis of one of the most extended forms of English Protestantism; that a Ministry for these multitudes could be raised up among themselves, a Ministry without education, many of its members, according to their critics, eccentric and predisposed to enthusiasm, if not fanaticism, and yet kept from doctrinal heresies; that they could be trained to habits of ministerial prudence and dignity, and to the most systematic methods of evangelical labour known in the modern Church; that with uncertain salaries, and generally with severe want, they should devotedly adhere to their work; that generation after generation they should consent to the extraordinary inconveniences of their ministerial itinerancy, to be torn up with their families every two or three years from their homes and Churches, and dispatched they knew not whither,-- such unparalleled measures, proposed beforehand, would have seemed, to thoughtful men, preposterous dreams. Yet more than a hundred years have shown them to be not only practicable, but effective beyond any other contemporary means of religious progress. That Wesley did not seek to anticipate the wants of Methodism, except in the most obvious instances, was both a reason and a proof of his practical ability to meet them when they came."

Such is an account of the calling and action of the *first Methodist Conference*. Well may it be said, "Whereunto has it grown!" since there are now many Methodist Conferences in the world.

#### CONFERENCE OF 1769

In the preparation of this work I have thought it best to observe the order of events, and to note specially the principal epochs, rather than merely chronicle the details of each successive year. Thus the first Conference, held in 1744, was an important epoch in the history of Methodism. The Society then received a separate and distinct organization: the Conference became the centre of union and the source of strength; and its members went

forth, guided by fixed rules, preaching the same doctrines, and aiming at one great end; namely, the conversion of souls to Christ, and “spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land.” Those who desire to trace the regular order of occurrences in the detail of dates, will do well to turn to the History of Methodism by Dr. George Smith, and also that by Dr. Abel Stevens.

The Conference of 1769 is selected as another important epoch; this being the one at which an appeal from America was received, for the appointment of Ministers to that country, and from which the first two Ministers were sent to that vast continent and people. Other matters of great importance were also discussed and settled by this assembly, which was held in Leeds, and commenced on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August. During the cycle of twenty-five years,--a quarter of a century,--the work had rapidly progressed, acquiring greater consistency and gathering fresh force, until its momentum had become very great, and was extensively felt. In 1744 the number of Circuits was nine; now they had increased to fifty-six. There were then held a dozen Lay Preachers; now the number of Itinerants was about eighty, besides a large staff of Local Preachers and Class Leaders. There were now 28,263 members of Society, besides the large numbers who attended the chapels, but were not enrolled as members. Many chapels had been built in different parts of Great Britain, and also in Ireland. Kingswood School had also been founded, for the education of Ministers’ sons. The great event of this Conference was the appointment of Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor as the first Ministers to America.

In the year 1760, the first Methodists, from among the Palatines in Ireland, emigrated to America, among whom were Philip Emery and Barbara Hick. They were afterwards joined by another party in 1765, when public worship was commenced, and a Class formed. Subsequently they were greatly strengthened by the arrival of Captain Webb; and a chapel was built in New York,--the first Wesleyan chapel erected in America. Being thus prepared of the Lord, this active little band sent a pressing request to Mr. Wesley for regular Preachers to be appointed. “It was at this Conference that the first appeal for Methodist preaching from America was presented by Wesley. ‘Who is willing to go?’ he asked. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor responded, and were appointed to the distant field. The occasion could not fail to produce a deep interest in the assembly. Methodism had already begun its work in the West Indies by Nathaniel Gilbert, who had formed a Society of two hundred Negroes in Atigua. Whitefield had spread it in spirit and power among the Independent Churches of North America, where he was about to die. It was now to take an organic form in the New World by the agency of Wesley’s Lay Preachers. ‘What can we do further in token of our brother love?’ he asked, after the appointment of Boardman and Pilmoor. ‘Let us now make a collection among ourselves,’ was the prompt response, and the liberal sum of £70 was collected among these generous men, most of whom were habitual sufferers from want. Twenty of the seventy pounds were appropriated for the voyage of the two Missionaries, and fifty were sent forward paying the debt of ‘Wesley Chapel,’ the first that ever bore that name, and the first Methodist church of the Western hemisphere.”

Another subject, which had acquired considerable importance, was, the manner in which the Preachers and their families were to be supported. Something had already been done



with this object in view, and a small pittance had been allowed to these hard-working men; but no step had been taken towards providing support for their wives and families. About two thirds of the Ministers were unmarried, and those who had wives did not know how to live. Under these circumstances some of the Preachers had, up to a recent date, been engaged in trade, in order to supplement their small income. But at the Conference of 1768 it was ascertained that the increase of Circuits and members was not satisfactory. This led to searching investigation as to the cause; and, among other things, it was thought that the circumstance of Preachers being engaged in trade had an injurious effect upon the work;--not that they usually carried on business in their own names; but even when it was done by means of agents, it was thought to be a serious evil. The result of the discussion on this question was embodied in a resolution affirming the impropriety of Itinerant Preachers carrying on trade, and an earnest exhortation to all Preachers who had been engaged therein, "to give up all, and attend to the one business." No unnecessary delay was to be allowed in carrying out the measure. "It is true," says the Minute on the subject, "this cannot be done on a sudden; but it may between this and the next Conference."

At the following Conference, (that of 1769,) the subject of the support of Preachers' wives was seriously discussed; and the decision arrived at was, that a small allowance should be made, probably on the ground that the Preachers had been required to give up all trade, and devote all their time, energies, and attention to the work of Christ. The following statement, given in Dr. Smith's words, will be interesting to all Methodists, and the Bradford friends especially will have the opportunity of verifying the *data*. "At this Conference an important discussion took place respecting a provision for Preachers' wives. It was said, 'Many inconveniences have arisen from the present method of providing for Preachers' wives. The Preachers who are most wanted in several places, cannot be sent thither because they are married; and if they are sent, the people look upon them with an evil eye, because they cannot bear the burden of their families.' The question therefore arose, 'How may these inconveniences be remedied?' In answer to this question, it was resolved that the Circuits should contribute according to their means toward the support of the wives of the Preachers, whether married or single Preachers were appointed to them. The allowance for a wife was, at this time, fixed at £10 *per annum*, and the following kind of assessment made:--London was to contribute £5 *per quarter*, or sufficient for two; Sussex, £2. 10s.; Salisbury, Bradford, Bristol, Devon, Cornwall East the same,; Cornwall West, £5; Manchester, Leeds, Bristol, York, Yarm, Haworth, the Dales, the same; Staffordshire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire, £2 10s.; Liverpool, Sheffield, £3. 15s.; Lincolnshire East, £6; West, £3. 15s.; Bradford, £3. 15s.; Newcastle, £7. 10s. Thus a provision was made for thirty-six wives at £2. 10s. *per quarter* each. There were at that time but thirty-one wives of Preachers dependent on this means of support; and the surplus was ordered to be divided among those who had children, or according to their requirements.

"Notwithstanding these efforts to make an improved provision for the Preachers, it was still very inadequate; indeed, so much so, that besides the persecution which their labours provoked, they had to endure great, sometimes very grievous privations. So extensively was this the case, that many who bade fair to be the brightest ornaments of the Wesleyan

Itinerancy, as their families increased, were driven back to business, merely to obtain the ordinary necessities of life. The following extract from the Bradford Circuit book for 1770 is given as a specimen of the usages of the Connexion in what was then regarded as the advanced era of its financial movements:--

The preacher's quarterly board, 13 weeks, at 3s. 6d.	£2. 5s. 6d.
The preacher's quarterage	£3. 0s. 0d.
Ditto ditto for the wife	£1. 17s. 6d.
Allowed for servant	£0. 12s. 6d.
Allowed for turnpikes	£0. 6s. 0d.
TOTAL	£8. 1s. 6d.

“To those not conversant with Methodistic affairs, it may be necessary to state the the sum allowed under the head of ‘weekly board’ was designed for the maintenance of the family; or, as it is technically entered in one page of the Society’s record, ‘for eating.’ The ‘quarterage’ was intended to meet the expense of clothing, books, &c. Less than £33 *per annum* was thus the income of the Preacher and his family for clothing, maintenance, and other necessities! The Preacher, it is true, was much from home; provisions, too, must have been considerably cheaper than at present; yet, with every allowance for all these, other aid must have been imperatively necessary to enable a Preacher and his family to *live*.”

In order to raise the additional amount required for the Preachers’ wives, it was resolved to make an annual collection in all the congregations.

Another matter which gave Mr. Wesley and the Preachers deep concern was, the union and supervision of the Preachers and the Societies after the Founder’s death. He was now in his sixty-sixth year; and although he felt no decay of energy, yet, judging by the most favourable average of human life, his presence could not be calculated upon much longer. So long as he was among the Preachers, they were sure to acknowledge his authority and to be guided by his counsels; but as soon as he was dead, his authority must cease, and there was nothing to supply its place. Various methods and plans were suggested; but these were all ultimately abandoned, or absorbed in the *Deed of Declaration*, which will be noticed in another place.

In the rapid progress of the work of Methodism, it had been objected that Mr. Wesley arrogated too much power to himself, and offensive epithets had been used, such as “Pope,” &c. It was admitted by his assailants that he called the Conference together for consultation; but they asserted that at the same time he took the control of every thing into his own hands. The fact of his doing this he did not deny, but affirmed that thereby he did no one any wrong, as the Preachers were all his children in the Gospel; besides which the Connexion was a perfectly voluntary association, and its members knew the nature of its organization, and, if they did not approve of it, were under no obligation to united themselves with him, or to remain in it any longer than was agreeable to them. Under these circumstances he held that it would be unfair to attempt to force upon him a

course of action contrary to the dictates of his own judgment. The reasonableness of this line of argument every impartial person must admit.

At the Conference of 1748 England had been divided into nine "Circuits," arranged in the following order:

"I.—LONDON: including, 1. London itself. 2. Kent and Surrey. 3. Essex. 4. Brentford. 5. Windsor. 6. Wycomb. 7. Oxford. 8. Reading. 9. Blueberry. 10. Salisbury.

"II.—BRISTOL: including, 1. Bristol itself. 2. Kingswood. 3. Bath. 4. Bearfield. 5. The Devizes. 6. Road. 7. Coleford. 8. Oakhill. 9. Shepton Mallard. 10. Middlesey. 11. Beercrocombe. 12. Taunton. 13. Collompton.

"III.—CORNWALL: including, 1. Tavistock. 2. Plymouth Dock. 3. Trewint. 4. St. Tue. 5. Gwennap. 6. St. Agnes. 7. Illogan, &c. 8. St. Ives. 9. The Western Societies.

"IV.—IRELAND: including, 1. Dublin. 2. Tullamore. 3. Tyrrel's Pass. 4. Athlone.

"V.—WALES: including, 1. Cardiff. 2. Fonmon. 3. Lanmais, &c. 4. Lantriffent.

"VI.—STAFFORDSHIRE: including, 1. Stroud. 2. Cirencester. 3. Stanley. 4. Evesham. 5. Wensbury. 6. Shrewsbury. 7. Leominster.

"VII.—CHESHIRE: including, 1. Cheshire itself. 2. Nottingham. 3. Derbyshire. 4. Lancashire. 5. Sheffield.

"VIII.—YORKSHIRE: including, 1. Leeds. 2. Birstal. 3. Keighley. 4. Acomb. 5. Syke-house. 6. Epworth. 7. Hainton. 8. Grimsby. 9. The Fens.

"IX.—NEWCASTLE: including, 1. Osmotherley. 2. Newcastle itself. 3. Sunderland. 4. Biddick. 5. Burnupfield. 6. Spen. 7. Swalwell. 8. Horseley. 9. Plessey. 10. Berwick-upon-Tweed."

This arrangement, when compared with that of the present day, strikes us with wonder, and fills the heart of every lover of Methodism with gratitude for the unexampled progress which has been made in little more than one hundred years. Meantime Charles Wesley had not ceased to travel in co-operation with his brother; but in 1757 he discontinued his regular course of labour in connexion with him, though his name was still retained on the Minutes, and in a more private manner he sought to advocate the interests of the cause. He saw that, year by year, there was a greater tendency to separate from the Established Church; and as his attachment to that body was strong, he gradually withdrew from open and active labour with his brother. There was this difference between John and Charles Wesley; They were both attracted to the Church of England, but John had placed the salvation of souls and the glory of God above Church order, whilst Charles regarded that order as a "sine qua non." The latter was desirous for men to be saved and go to heaven, but insisted that the process should be conducted in a

“regular” way, and in accordance with Church “order:” and if it could not be carried on in that manner, then he must decline having to do with it in any other. No person, however, can fully understand his case without reading the excellent Life of him by the Rev. Thomas Jackson. Charles Wesley’s fame is enshrined in his immortal hymns; and, thanks to his genius and spirituality, the psalmody of the Wesleyan Methodists is not only not surpassed, but not equaled by any other collection. Much of its depth, originality, and force, was imparted to it by the stirring scenes and sore persecutions through which he himself passed with heroic spirit in the early days of Methodism. He could not have produced such spirited and practical hymns, had it not been for his own personal experience. Many of them were composed on horseback, and some of them amongst lawless riots, and whilst suffering from boisterous mobs.

The Minutes of the Annual Conferences now began to be regularly published, and have continued to be so ever since. As Dr. Stevens writes, “With the twenty-second Conference, held at Manchester, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1765, began the regular annual publication of the Minutes. They now assumed more than ever the form of business-like documents. Theological and ecclesiastical questions are seldom discussed in them, as these subjects had already been settled with sufficient definiteness for the present progress of the body. The names of Preachers admitted on trial, of the Assistants, Helpers, and Circuits, the appointments for the ensuing year, and financial arrangements, with singularly minute rules of discipline for the Societies as well as for the Preachers, make up their substance.” At the preceding Conference,--1764,--Mr. Wesley made another powerful but ineffectual effort for incorporation with the Established Church. “He was, however, still intent on the union of all evangelical Clergymen in the great revival which he was conducting, and on the steadfast union of his people with the Church. He therefore addressed a circular letter to many of the most evangelical Clergy of the Establishment, proposing, not any concession of opinions, for ‘they might agree or disagree touching absolute decrees on the one hand and perfection on the other,’ but a more catholic spirit, and better co-operation with him, as a member of the Church of England, in the spread of true religion throughout the land. It is to this correspondence that he refers in the brief allusion of his Journal to the present Conference. Though only three Clergymen had responded to his overtures, no less than twelve met him at the session, but not in the catholic spirit which he himself had manifested. They insisted, in fine, upon the very course which Walker had proposed and Wesley had rejected seven years before. It was a momentous juncture to Methodism; and to Wesley’s calm steadfastness subsequent generations owe the fact that it was not then absorbed into the Establishment, and that the organic consolidation which it had been for some time assuming was not effectually counteracted. Charles Wesley himself had the indiscretion to take side with these Clergymen against him, and the heedlessness to declare that if he were a parish Minister the Lay Itinerants ‘should not preach in his parish.’ The Lay Preachers showed both their good sense and self-respect by unanimously agreeing with Wesley; and as the clerical visitors would not unite with him, except on their own conditions, he determined to pursue his providential course without them. And thus was another step taken forward toward the legitimate independence and permanence of Methodism.”

The Calvinistic controversy prevailed at this time and for some years after with considerable force, and ultimately led to the permanent separation of those who held predestinarian views from Wesley and his people. Mr. Whitefield and Lady Huntington were at the head of those who favoured these tenets; and the sainted Fletcher conducted the controversy on the part of Wesley and his friends, taking the Arminian view of the subject, and advocating it with great ability and success; so much so, that since that time the Calvinistic views of many persons have been greatly moderated, whilst several Dissenting Churches have abandoned them altogether. Those who desire to see the subject fully and ably treated may gratify their wish by reading Dr. Stevens's "History of Methodism;" but in these pages I have only room for this passing notice.

Whilst, however, I thus summarily dispose of the Calvinistic controversy, I cannot withhold from the reader the closing scene of the life of that great, honoured, and successful Evangelist, George Whitefield, as sketched by Dr. Stevens. "He departed the same day for Newburyport, where it was expected he would preach on the morrow. While at supper, the pavement in front of the house, and even its hall, were crowded with people, impatient to hear a few words from his eloquent lips; but he was exhausted, and, rising from the table, said to one of the Clergymen who were with him, 'Brother, you must speak to these dear people; I cannot say a word.' Taking a candle he hastened toward his bedroom, but before reaching it he was arrested by the suggestion of his own generous heart, that he ought not thus to desert the anxious crowd hungering for the bread of life from his hands. He paused on the stairs to address them. He had preached his last sermon; this was to be his last exhortation. It would seem that some pensive misgiving, some vague presentiment touched his soul with the saddening apprehension that the moments were too precious to be lost in rest; he lingered on the stairway, while the crowd gazed up at him with tearful eyes, as Elisha at the ascending prophet. His voice, never perhaps, surpassed in its music and pathos, *flowed on until the candle which he held in his hand burned away and went out in its socket!* The next morning he was not, for God had taken him!

"He died of an attack of asthma, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1770, as the Sabbath sun was rising from the neighbouring sea. The effulgence of the eternal day had risen upon his beneficent, his fervid, his consecrated life. He had slept comfortably till two o'clock in the morning, when he awoke his traveling attendant, and told him that his 'asthma was coming on again.' His companion recommended him not to preach so often as he had. 'I would rather wear out than rust out,' he replied. He had expressed a desire to die suddenly, and now realized his wish. He sat in his bed some time, praying that God would bless his preaching, his Bethesda school, the Tabernacle congregation, and 'all connexions on the other side of the water.' He attempted again to sleep, but could not; he hastened to the open window, panting for breath. 'I am dying,' he exclaimed. A physician was called, but could give him no relief. At six o'clock he 'fetched one gasp, stretched out his feet, and breathed no more.'"

In some respects he lived and laboured alone, but his life and labours were honoured with amazing influence and success. His marvelous career is able summed up by the author from whom the previous quotation is taken: "Thus lived and died, and in the results of his

labours lives still and will live for ever, George Whitefield, the ‘common drawer’ of the Gloucester Inn, the ‘poor Scholar’ or Servitor of Pembroke College, the ‘Methodist’ of the Holy Club of Oxford, and the ‘prince of Preachers.’ In proportion as the historian of his times should, by the soberest study of facts, approximate an exact estimate of his life and its consequences, would he incur the suspicion of exaggeration. It is not only questionable whether any other one man ever addressed by the voice so many of his fellow-men, but whether any other ever swayed them more irresistibly. It has been estimated that he preached eighteen thousand sermons, which would be ten a week for the thirty-four years of his ministry. He crossed the Atlantic thirteen times. The preaching tours he made through the colonies, from Maine to Georgia, would, with our modern means of travel, signalize before the country any Clergyman’s life; but the inconvenience and labour which they then involved can scarcely now be conceived. He has the grand distinction of having traveled more extensively for the Gospel, preached it oftener, and preached it more eloquently, than any other man, ancient or modern, within the same limits of life. A nobler eulogy could not crown his memory.”

John Wesley preached his funeral sermon in the Tabernacle, London.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PERSECUTION

“The carnal mind is enmity against God,” says a high authority: opposition to that which is godly and God-like is therefore only the natural action of man’s depraved nature. Thus has it been in all ages of the world, from the death of righteous Abel to the present time. The most notable instance of the operation of this law of sin was in the case of Christ Himself, and culminated in His death on the cross. He was God incarnate, holy, just, and good; and therefore on Him was made to fall man’s intensest rage, bitterness, and blasphemy. Amongst His followers Stephen was the proto-martyr, and had the honour of being the leader of that noble band who have sealed the truth with their blood. In every age of the world, when there has been the most striking display of the power of God in the salvation of men, “the offence of the cross” has been the greatest. It was so in the Apostles’ days, and again in those of the Reformation from Popery, in England, Germany, Switzerland, and France; and when John Wesley, and those who laboured with him, successfully preached the Gospel of Christ, hell was “moved from beneath” to stop the work; and every kind of scorn, rage, and violence was employed to inflict suffering or death upon these zealous, godly, and laborious men.

It is worthy of notice that in most instances the drunken rabble were only the instruments of carrying out the ill-will of Clergymen, Magistrates, and persons moving in the higher walks of life. When Christ was crucified, the great persecutor was the High Priest, together with the Priests and Levites: in the Reformation from Popery the Pope, Cardinals, Prelates, and priests were the great moving power to employ the secular arm to cut off these offending innovators: and now again, in the eighteenth century, the Clergy, and those whom they could influence, were the parties to resort to every kind of violence

to destroy the work of God. Sometimes they preached from the pulpit upon the subject, and sometimes they employed “men of the baser sort,” making them half mad with intoxicating drink, in order that they might more fully and freely execute their dark designs.

Instead of giving my own account of any of the scenes which presented themselves, I prefer quoting some of the statements of those who were the subjects of these persecutions and annoyances, which took place in almost every part of the kingdom, and were continued through a series of years.

“Another prominent element of this history,” says Dr. Smith, “and one which has been reserved for notice here, is the violent persecution with which the Wesleys and their friends were assailed in many places, and for some years. It is believed, that the manner, extent, and continued fury of this persecution are without a parallel in English history. Most of the other aggressions which have been made on religion have taken place under the cover of real or pretended law, or by the will and authority of cruel and violent rulers; but this was originated and carried on without law, and in defiance of it, by the outrageous violence of rude and vulgar mobs, very frequently instigated and urged on by the malignant feelings of gentlemen, Magistrates, and Clergymen.

“It is a singular circumstance that the first public interruption and opposition that Wesley received in his out-door preaching was from the celebrated Beau Nash, the noted master of the ceremonies at Bath. Great expectation had been raised in the public mind, by reports which had been circulated respecting a threatened opposition to Wesley on this occasion; and he was entreated not to preach, lest some fearful calamity might happen. He, however, was not the man to be deterred, by any apprehension of consequences, from discharging what he believed to be a religious duty. He accordingly took his place, and began to preach. For a while he proceeded in quiet; but at length Mr. Nash appeared, and demanded by what authority he did those things. Wesley replied, ‘By authority of Jesus Christ, conveyed to me by the (now) Archbishop of Canterbury, when he laid hands upon me, and said, “Take thou authority to preach the Gospel.”’ Then Mr. Nash objected to Wesley’s proceeding by asserting, it was ‘contrary to Act of Parliament.’ This, said he, ‘is a conventicle.’ To which Mr. Wesley rejoined, ‘The conventicles mentioned in that Act, (as the preamble shows,) were seditious meetings; but this is not such, here is no shadow of sedition; therefore it is not contrary to the Act.’ Nash replied, ‘I say it is: and besides, your preaching frightens people out of their wits.’ But when asked by Wesley whether he had ever heard him preach, he said he had not, but judged by common report; to which judgment Wesley demurred, as resting on insufficient grounds. Nash, however, not willing to be thus silenced, demanded what the people met there for; on which an old woman cried out, ‘Leave him to me, let an old woman answer him.—You, Mr. Nash, take care of your body, we take care of our souls, and for our souls’ food we come here.’ on which he retired. This unmannerly and profane intrusion, however, was but the beginning of a series of annoyances and persecutions. On the Thursday following, two men, hired for that purpose, began singing a ballad in the midst of Wesley’s prayer, as he was preparing for preaching on Priest-down.”

A specimen of these raging persecutions is given in the following extract from Dr. Stevens: "On Wesley's return to Bristol, his brother set out for the north, preaching in almost every town on his route, and was repeatedly beset by ferocious mobs. At Wednesbury he found that Methodism was accomplishing its salutary work among the colliers. More than three hundred had been reformed and gathered into the Society, while others raged against the Itinerants, like untamed beasts of the forest. He walked with his Wednesbury brethren to Walsall, singing as they went; but as they passed through the streets of the latter place, they were hailed by the shouts of the rabble. He took his stand on the steps of the market-house, where a host of excited men rallied against him, and bore down like a flood to sweep him away. Stones flew fast and thick. Many struck without hurting him. He kept his ground till he was about to close his discourse, when the raging stream bore him from the steps. He regained them, and was pronouncing the benediction, when he was again swept down; but a third time he took his position, and returned thanks to God, after which he passed through the midst of the rioters, menaced on every hand, but untouched.

"He went to Sheffield, where worse scenes awaited him. He says: 'Hell from beneath wa moved to oppose us.' As soon as he was in the desk, 'the floods began to lift up their voice.' A military officer contradicted and blasphemed, but the preacher took no notice of him, and sang on. Stones were thrown, hitting the desk and people. To save them and the house, he gave notice that he should preach out of doors, and look the enemy in the face. 'The whole army of aliens followed me,' he says; their leader laid hold of him and reviled him; he gave the enraged soldier 'A Word in Season, or Advice to a Soldier,' one of the tracts of his brother; he then prayed particularly for the King, and preached on amid the contention, though often struck in the face by stones. After the sermon he prayed for sinners as servants of their master, the devil, upon which the officer ran at him with great fury, threatening revenge for his abuse, as he called it, of the King his master. He forced his way through the crowd, drew his sword, and presented it to the preacher's breast. Wesley threw open his vest, and fixing his eye on his assailant, calmly said: 'I fear God, and honour the King.' The Captain's countenance fell in a moment; he put up his sword and quickly retreated from the scene. Wesley returned to the house of a friend; but the rioters followed, and exceeded in their outrage anything he had seen before. Those of Moorfields, Cardiff, and Walsall, were lambs, he says, compared to these. They resolved to pull down the preaching-house, 'and they set to their work,' he writes, 'while we were praying and praising God. It was a glorious time with us. Every word of exhortation sunk deep, every prayer was sealed, and many found the Spirit of glory resting on them.' The mob pressed hard to break open the door. Wesley would have gone out to them, but his brethren would not suffer him. The rabble raged all night, and by morning had pulled down one end of the house.

"Their outcries often waked me in the night,' he writes; 'yet I believe I got more sleep than any of my neighbours.' This disgraceful tumult he ascribes to sermons preached against the Methodists by the Clergy of Sheffield."

These were the scenes that awaited them, as they proceeded from place to place; but they halted not in their onward course.



Let us look at Ireland, and see whether matters were any better there, especially as John Wesley pronounced the Irish to be “the politest nation he had ever seen.” He exclaims, “What a nation is this! Every man, woman, and child, except some of the great vulgar, not only patiently, but gladly suffers the word of exhortation.” But it was not long before the “roaring lion” was heard here also. “In about two weeks [September, 1747] Charles Wesley arrived in Dublin, accompanied by Charles Perronet, another of the sons of the Shoreham Vicar, and remained more than half a year in the country. During the brief interval since the visit of his brother, the ‘roaring lion’ had raged in Dublin. A Papist mob had broken into the chapel, and some storehouses which appertained to its premises, destroying furniture, stealing goods, making a bonfire of the seats, window cases, and pulpit in the streets; wounding with clubs the members of the Society, and threatening to murder all who assembled with them. It was, in fine, a thoroughly Irish riot, bristling with shillalahs and triumphant with noise. The Mayor was disposed to protect the Methodists, but was powerless before the great numerical force of their persecutors. The grand jury threw out bills brought against the rioters, and thus gave indirect encouragement to their violence. Wesley met the Society privately, but was followed through the streets to his lodgings by a retinue of the rabble, who complimented him with shouts of derision.”

Having given an example of the manner in which the two brothers endured persecution and triumphed over it, I will now cite the case of one or two of the Lay Preachers, to show that they received no better treatment.

John Nelson was amongst the first Lay Preachers who assisted Mr. Wesley, and occupies a prominent place in the history of Methodist Heroism. He was a robust, powerful man, a mason by trade. Before he met with the Wesleys, he was a sincere seeker of salvation. When he heard Mr. Wesley in London explain the plan of salvation with so much simplicity and clearness, he quickly embraced it, sought and found the Saviour, was made happy in the love of God, and became zealous for His glory. He then returned to his home at Birstal, in Yorkshire, where his wife was living; and she also soon became a partaker of like precious faith. Nelson began to explain and apply the Word of God in his own house; but in a short time the number of those who desired to hear him increased so much that he stood at the door and addressed a multitude from thence. Wesley shortly afterwards proceeded to the North, and when he found what was done, he permitted rather than encouraged Nelson to proceed. The latter soon extended his efforts, working by day and preaching by night. His ministry was made exceedingly useful, and, in a short time, he extended his labours to other towns. He became the spiritual father of Methodism in Leeds, and in many parts of the North of England. He was a very powerful preacher, and many were converted to God through his instrumentality. He had not laboured long, however, before he was made to feel the full force of violent persecution; but he bore “hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” “Nelson was to encounter worse perils immediately after at Hepworth Moor. He was assailed there with a shower of stones while preaching on a table in the open air. All who were around him fled, leaving him as a mark for the flying missiles, but none touched him. When he descended, and was departing, he was struck on the back of his head with a brick, and fell bleeding to the earth. He was unable to rise for some time, but being lifted up, staggered away, the blood

running down his back and filling his shoes, and the mob following him with shouts and menaces that they would kill him as soon as he passed the limits of the town. "Lord," cried the periled Methodist, as he tottered along, "Thou wast slain without the gate, and canst deliver me from the hands of these bloodthirsty men." An honest man opened his door and took him in; a surgeon dressed his wound, and the same day he was on his way to preach at Acomb. There his trials were to culminate. A coach drove up crowded within and without by young men, who sang bacchanalian songs and threw rotten eggs at the women of the assembly. Two of the strongest of the rioters approached him, one of them swearing that he would kill him on the spot. Handing his coat and wig to his associate, he rushed at the preacher, crying, "If I do not kill him I will be damned." Nelson stepped aside, and the assailant pitched on his head. On rising, he repeated the attempt, and rent away Nelson's shirt collar, but again fell. In a third assault he prostrated the preacher, and leaping with his knees upon him, beat him until he was senseless, opening meanwhile the wound on his head, which bled freely. The ruffian supposed he was dead, and returned to his associates, seizing as he passed one of Nelson's friends, whom he threw against the wall with such violence as to break two of his ribs. The rest of the mob doubted whether Nelson had been completely dispatched, and twenty of them approached him. They found him bleeding profusely, and lifted him up. The brother of the parish Clergyman was among them, and denouncing him, said: 'According to your preaching, you would prove our Ministers to be blind guides and false prophets; but we will kill you as fast as you come.' Another said: 'If Wesley comes on Tuesday, he shall not live another day in this world.' When they had got him into the street, they set up a huzza, and a person caught hold of his right hand 'and gave him a hasty pluck;' at the same time another struck him on the side of his head and knocked him down. As he rose, they again prostrated him. No less than eight times did they fell him to the earth. His robust frame alone saved him from death. When he lay on the ground unable to rise again, they took him by the hair of his head and dragged him upon the stones for nearly twenty yards, some kicking him meanwhile with merciless rage. Six of them stood upon him to 'tread the Holy Ghost out of him,' as they said. 'Then they let me alone a little while,' he writes, 'and said on to another "We cannot kill him." One said, "I have heard that a cat hath nine lives, but I think that he hath nine score." Another said, "If he has, he shall die this day." A third said, "Where is his horse? For he shall quit the town immediately." And they said to me, "Order your horse to be brought to you, for you shall go before we leave you." I said, "I will not, for you intend to kill me in private, that you may escape justice; but if you do murder me, it shall be in public; and it may be that the gallows will bring you to repentance, and your souls may be saved from the wrath to come.'" They attempted then to drag him to a well and thrust him into it, but a courageous woman who was standing near it defended him, knocking several of his persecutors down. These ruffians passed in the community for gentlemen, and whilst still harassing Nelson at the well, they were recognized by two ladies in a carriage from the city, whom they knew; they slunk away confounded, and their victim escaped."

A volume might be filled with a recital of the numerous instances in which these disgraceful scenes were enacted, but limited space will allow me to give only one extract more, which is from the "Life of Mr. Thomas Mitchell," contained in Jackson's "Lives of Early Methodist Preachers," vol. i., p. 247-249.

“In the year 1751, I was stationed in Lincolnshire. I found a serious people and an open door; but there were many adversaries. This was far the most trying year I had ever known. But in every temptation God made a way of escape, that I might be able to bear it.

“On Sunday, August 7<sup>th</sup>, I came to Wrangle very early in the morning. I preached, as usual, at five. About six, two constables came at the head of a large mob. They violently broke in upon the people, seized upon me, pulled me down, and took me to a public-house, where they kept me till four in the afternoon. Then one of the constables seemed to relent, and said, ‘I will go to the Minister, and inquire of him whether we may not now let the poor man go.’ When he came back, he said, ‘They were not to let him go yet.’ So he took me out to the mob, who presently hurried me away, and threw me into a pool of standing water. It took me up to the neck. Several times I strove to get out, but they pitched me in again. They told me I must go through it seven times. I did so, and then they let me come out. When I had got upon dry ground, a man stood ready with a pot full of white paint. He painted me all over from head to foot, and then they carried me into a public-house again. Here I was kept till they had put five more of our friends into the water. Then they came and took me out again, and carried me to a great pond, which was railed in on every side, being ten or twelve feet deep. Here four men took me by my arms and legs, and swung me backward and forward. For a moment I felt the flesh shrink; but it was quickly gone. I gave myself up to the Lord, and was content His will should be done. They swung me two or three times, and then threw me as far as they could into the water. The fall and the water soon took away my senses, so that I felt nothing more. But some of them were not willing to have me drowned. So they watched until I came above water, and then, catching hold of my clothes with a long pole, made shift to drag me out.

“I lay senseless for some time. When I came to myself, I saw only two men standing by me. One of them helped me up, and desired me to go with him. He brought me to a little house, where they quickly put me to bed. But I had not lain long before the mob came again, pulled me out of bed, carried me into the street, and swore they would take away one of my limbs, if I would not promise to come there no more. I told them, ‘I can promise no such thing.’ But the men that had hold of me promised for me, and took me back into the house, and put me to bed again.

“Some of the mob then went to the Minister again, to know what they must do with me. He told them, ‘You must take him out of the parish.’ So they came and took me out of bed a second time. But I had no clothes to put on; my own being wet, and also covered with paint. But they put an old coat about me, took me about a mile, and set me upon a little hill. They then shouted three times, ‘God save the King, and the devil take the Preacher!’”

Thus these veterans laboured, and suffered, and conquered. One thing strikes us as marvelous—that so few of them were killed, or even seriously injured. Doubtless illness and death followed these outrages in many instances; but these cases, as compared with the violence displayed and the missiles thrown, were comparatively few. The Master

whom they served was often a wall of fire round about them, not only restraining the wrath of their enemies, but causing the remainder of that wrath to praise Him. Many of their most violent persecutors were converted, and became zealous preachers of that Gospel which they had so ardently sought to destroy; and ultimately all active opposition came to an end, and the “offence of the Cross” ceased.

Great care will be required by the Methodists of the present day, or they will become very feeble and effeminate followers of this noble band. If there is not now active open persecution, there is the enervating influence of the world, with its gaudy fashions, gay followings, and absorbing pursuits. To resist and overcome its allurements will require an amount of self-denial, taking up the cross, and resolute energy equal to what was demanded in those old troublous times. The profession of religion is wide-spread, but the athletic, robust Christian is not often met with. The Church and the world still greatly need men filled with the Spirit, men of deep piety and of self-denying labour.

Let not the Methodists of the present generation forget the price at which their peaceful state and many privileges were purchased. “The blood of the martyrs” has been “the seed of the Church;” and the obloquy, scorn, and sufferings endured by the early Methodists were the purchase price of the comfort, respectability, and high position now attained. At the present day every one sits under his own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid. Let gratitude abound in proportion to the benefits enjoyed, and let that gratitude be made apparent by energetic participation in every good word and work.

## CHAPTER IX

### IRELAND

The “Emerald Isle” has been, and still is, the statesman’s great difficulty; and so it will remain, as long as Popery is dominant. The true cause of Ireland’s woes is Popery: it is sick at heart, and the only cure is Bible truth and Gospel power. Politicians seek remedies from other sources; and doubtless there are many ways in which they may ameliorate the condition of the Irish: but such methods as endowing Maynooth, establishing Popish Universities, and giving salaries to the Papal Priesthood, can only feed the disease and increase the evil. So long as Ireland is Popish, she is alien to Great Britain, and loyal to Rome. Ireland is said to be the only country which the Reformation did not benefit. And, in truth, the subjection of the people by force of arms, and the establishment of a Protestant State hierarchy, did not reform the people, or touch the heart of the nation; so that in sympathy and interest Ireland has not been one with Great Britain. Scotland became part of the British Empire not so much by force of arms, as through the triumphs of the Protestant religion. Edward I was the “hammer of the Scotch,” but he did not break the heart of the nation. It was when Scotland received the Reformation that it became one in heart with England. Thus their sympathies and interests could blend; and consequently a real union has grown up and become consolidated. Not so with Ireland: she was broken by the power of the sword, but remained rebellious at heart, and has remained so ever since, and will continue so until the internal state of the nation is renovated. Episcopal

hierarchy was established in Ireland, but it was forced upon the people, and hated by the mass; and with sorrow of heart we are compelled to admit, that not only were many of the Protestant Clergy destitute of evangelical religion, but some of them were immoral in their lives; so that more proselytes were made from Protestantism to Popery than from Popery to Protestantism. Such was the state of the people and nation when the Wesleys first went there.

Mr. Wesley had no sooner established his Societies in England, than he turned his attention to Ireland, and resolved to visit it. He “arrived in Dublin on Sunday, the ninth of August, 1747. The bells were ringing, and he went immediately to St. Mary’s church, and in the afternoon, by arrangement with the Curate, preached to as ‘gay and careless a congregation’ as he had ever seen. The Curate treated him politely, but was immovably prejudiced against his employment of Lay Preachers, and assured him that the Archbishop was equally opposed to so extraordinary a novelty. Wesley sought the Archbishop, and had an interview with him ten miles from the city. Two or three hours were spent in the consultation, during which the Prelate advanced and Wesley answered ‘abundance of objections.’ Had Berkeley been the Bishop, Methodism would probably have taken possession of the Church. Wesley gives us no information of the result of the interview; he immediately began, however, his usual course of independent labours.

“A Lay Preacher from England, Thomas Williams, had formerly a Society in Dublin in 1747. Wesley found in it nearly three hundred members. He examined them personally, as was his habit in the principal Societies at London, Bristol, and Newcastle; for none of his ‘assistants or successors has been more minute and faithful in such pastoral labours.’ He found them ‘strong in faith,’ and admired their docile and cordial spirit. He pronounced the Irish the politest people he had ever seen. ‘What a nation,’ he exclaims, ‘is this! Every man, woman, and child, except a few of the great vulgar, not only patiently, but gladly suffers the word of exhortation.’ He had not yet fully learned their character; the ‘roaring lion,’ as he afterwards found, ‘shook himself here also.’”

The first impression made by the Irish on Mr. Wesley’s mind was, as we see from the above, a very favourable one: but he soon had abundant cause to alter his opinion. His brother Charles, who shortly after followed him, had to suffer the most violent persecution, and other followers and Preachers had to endure “a great fight of affliction.” Yet, notwithstanding the formidable opposition and harassing persecutions of Popish Priests and Irish mobs, Methodism not only lived, but prospered in the land, producing the most beneficial effects upon the temporal as well as the spiritual condition of the people. This was especially manifest among the Palatines in the south-west of the country. These people were Germans, who emigrated from their native land in the reign of Queen Anne, and settled in the south-west of Ireland in the county of Limerick. They were Protestants by profession; but, having been long removed from their own country, and having had no Ministers to take the spiritual oversight of them, had sunk down into the lowest state of profligacy and vice. In this condition they were found by Mr. Wesley, and those who laboured with him in the Lord: but as they at once received the truth as it is in Jesus, the transforming effects were soon seen in their improved temporal condition

and their reformed lives. For a full account of these people, see Dr. Crook's "Ireland," etc.

This distinct notice of them is the more needful, as it was from among this obscure people that Methodism was first introduced into the United States of America. Without entering into details, which may be found in Dr. Crook's work, I must content myself with quoting his pictorial account of the first emigration to America.

"It is now just one hundred and six years since, one summer's morning, a group of emigrants might have been seen at the Custom House Quay, Limerick, preparing to embark for America. At that time emigration was not so common an occurrence as it is now, and the excitement connected with their departure was intense. They were Palatines from Ballingran, and were accompanied to the vessel side by crowds of their companions and friends, some of whom had come sixteen miles to say farewell for the last time. By a very slight effort of imagination you can vividly recall the scene. One of those about to leave—a young man, with a thoughtful look and resolute bearing—is evidently the leader of the party, and more than an ordinary pang is felt by many as they bid him farewell. He had been amongst the first fruits of his countrymen to Christ, had been the leader of the infant Church, and in their humble little sanctuary had often ministered to them the word of life. He is surrounded by his spiritual children and friends, who are anxious to have some parting words of counsel and instruction. He enters the vessel, and from its side once more breaks amongst them the bread of life. And now the last prayer is offered; they embrace each other; the vessel begins to move. As she recedes, uplifted hands, and better still, uplifted hearts attest what all felt. But none of all that vast multitude felt more, probably, than that young man. His name is Philip Embury. His party consisted of his wife—Mary Switzer, to whom he had been married in Rathkeale church about a year and a half before, --two of his brothers and their families, Peter Switzer, probably brother to his wife, Paul Heck and Barbara his wife, Valer Tettler, Philip Morgan, and a family of the Dulmages. The vessel arrived safely in New York on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, 1760. Who that pictures to his mind that first band of Christian emigrants leaving the Irish shore, but must be struck with the simple beauty of the scene? Yet who, amongst the crown that saw them leave, or the thousands whose eye will fall upon this sheet, could have thought that two of that little band were destined, in the mysterious Providence of God, to influence for good countless myriads of Adam's children, and that their names should live long as the sun and moon endure? Yet so it was."\* (\*Dr. Crook's "Ireland," pp. 73, 75)

We have already seen that Methodism was introduced into Ireland by John Wesley in August, 1747, and that he was quickly followed by his brother Charles, who carried on the work. It advanced with so much rapidity, that in August, 1752, only five years later, the first Conference was held by John Wesley, on his second visit to Limerick. "The record in his journal is characteristically brief: 'I spent Friday and Saurday in Conference with our Preachers, and the next week spake with each of the members of the Society; many of whom, I now found, were 'rooted and frounded in love,' and 'zealous of good works.'

“The following composed the Conference: John Wesley, Samuel Larwood, John Haughton, Joseph Cownley, John Fisher, Thomas Walsh, Jacob Rowell, Thomas Kead, Robert Swindells, John Whitford, and James Morris: all of whom, with the exception of Morris, may be regarded as Wesley’s staff of Itinerants then labouring in Ireland. Wesley had reason to suspect that the Calvinistic leaven had injured more of his Itinerants than Williams, and he dreaded its baneful influence upon Preachers and people as he did the plague. Hence, a large proportion of the time of this first Conference was given up to this subject. In answer to the question, ‘What wrong doctrines have been taught?’ we find the answer, ‘Such as border on Antinomianism and Calvinism.’ Baxter’s ‘Aphorisms on Justification’ were then read carefully, and the Scriptures referred to examined, and ‘all objections considered and answered.’ This course was all the more necessary because of the influence of Moravian teaching upon Methodism at that time; and many of these devoted labourers were young men who had had but little time or opportunity for obtaining clear views as to the doctrinal teaching of the Word of God on these controverted points. At this Conference, Philip Guier of Ballingran, James Morris, John Ellis, James Wild, Samuel Levie, and Samuel Hobert, were received as ‘fellow-labourers.’ Philip was received as what Wesley called ‘a Local Preacher,’ as distinguished from an Itinerant. Wesley never intended him to travel, but made him the first Methodist Pastor of the Palatines.”

Methodism in Ireland exercised distinct action in connexion with its own annual Conference, without being separated from the English Conference; the President of which is *ex officio* the President of the Irish Conference; the Irish Conference also having always its own representatives in the English Conference. This arrangement has doubtless been of unspeakable advantage to Irish Methodism, as men on the spot and in the work were much better able to understand its nature, and adapt the working power, than those at a distance could possibly be.

Mr. Wesley bestowed special care upon Ireland. He often visited it in person, and sometimes remained for months at a visit. He held twenty-one Conferences in that country, and appointed some of his best and most successful Preachers to labour there; so that it was sometimes said in England that Ireland had more than its share of attention: but Mr. Wesley declared that it would repay all the labour bestowed upon it. This prophetic declaration was amply verified. Ireland soon gave Thomas Walsh to England, who was declared by Mr. Wesley to be the best biblical scholar he had ever known; and when this accomplished and zealous man was removed by death at the early age of twenty-eight Mr. Wesley felt his loss keenly, and expressed his inability to fathom the mysterious dealings of God in connexion with His own work. Ireland has given many Ministers of eminence to England, among whom we will only mention the learned Commentator, Dr. Adam Clarke, and, of our contemporaries, the Rev. William Arthur, one of the ex-Presidents of the British Conference.

Many of the Irish Ministers have been most laborious and successful preachers of God’s holy Word. With true Christian heroism they have manfully maintained an unequal contest against the most formidable difficulties,—Popery, poverty, and emigration. In reference to the last, Dr. Crook observes: “Irish Methodism has probably lost from fifty to

seventy thousand members within the last century, of whom old Garrett Miller and his worthy family are not unfair specimens. If we take into account the children, who would in all probability have joined the Church of their fathers, the loss to the Irish Methodist Church by emigration during the past century cannot be much less than from a hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand members! And yet some wise folk in England and elsewhere amuse the public with homilies on the failure of Irish Methodism!" This is a result at which no one would have attempted to guess; and it was only after Dr. Crook had thoroughly investigated the subject that he made this statement.

The last Conference which the venerable Wesley attended in Ireland was in 1789. "In July Wesley presided for the last time in the Irish Conference, now composed in the main of Irishmen, as the great majority of the English brethren long since had retired from Ireland. Wesley's final testimony as to the Irish Conference,--which had then in its number such familiar names as John Crook, Thomas Barber, Gustavus Armstrong, Samuel Wood, David Gordon, the spiritual father of Gideon Ouseley, Matthias Joyce, Matthew Stewart, William Wilson, Thomas Ridgeway, George Brown, Andrew Hamilton, sen., and jun., James McMullen, John Malcolmson, John and Thomas Kerr, Alex. Moore, Lawrence Kane, and many more,--is worth transcription here. 'Friday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>.—Our little Conference began in Dublin, and ended Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup>. On this I observe I never had between forty and fifty such Preachers together in Ireland before; all of them, we had reason to hope, alive to God, and earnestly devoted to His service. I had much satisfaction in this Conference; in which, conversing with between forty and fifty Travelling Preachers, I found such a body of men as I hardly believed could have been found together in Ireland; men of so sound experience, so deep piety, and so strong understanding. I am convinced they are no way inferior to the English Conference, except it be in number.'"

Such was the character given of the Irish Preachers by this aged Apostle: well had they deserved it, and still they sustain it. The number of members is now 20,000, notwithstanding all their losses by emigration, &c. Irish Methodism retains all its energy; and now seeks to become more effective by the establishment of a College at Belfast for training Irish Ministers; towards which object the American Episcopal Church has largely contributed from its Centenary fund.

The Report of the Missionary Committee at the Irish Conference of 1876 gives the following statistics: 28 Mission Stations; 30 Missionaries; 54 chapels; 219 other preaching-places; 5 paid Catechists; 29 unpaid Local Preachers; 2,136 Church members; 104 on trial for Church membership; 1,761 scholars in the schools; and 6,954 attendants on public worship.

This is distinctly Mission work, as distinguished from ordinary Circuit work; and the labours of these Missionaries are confined to some of the most dark and depraved parts of the land, and are especially directed against the bold and frowning aspect of Popery.

Bishop Janes, at the Centenary Meeting in New York, when speaking on this subject, said, "The fact is, that wherever English-speaking Methodism exists out of England, it



has been planted by Irishmen, and English-speaking Methodism is Irish Methodism the world over.” We must, however, take an exception to this high eulogy. There are many English-speaking Methodists in the South African Colonies; but the work was not begun by Irish Methodists, since the Rev. Barnabas Shaw commenced the work at the Cape, and the Rev. William Shaw came out with the British settlers in 1820; and neither of these eminent men was of Irish birth or extraction.

In closing his book on Ireland, Dr. Crook makes the following appeal for a fair estimate of what Irish Methodism has accomplished: “Before closing this little book, and sending it abroad, I feel that I should embrace this opportunity of saying a few words on the claims of Irish Methodism on English-speaking Methodism everywhere, but particularly in America. This book has already outgrown my original idea very much, and these parting words, in taking leave of the indulgent reader, must be few. No one, I think, can fully understand the peculiar position and difficulties of Irish Methodism, who has not spent some years in the Itinerancy in Ireland, and seen Methodism in all the provinces, and from behind the scenes as well as from without. If we are to estimate power by the difficulty which it surmounts in its victorious march, I may be allowed to think that Irish Methodism will compare favourably with any branch of the great Wesleyan family in any part of the world. Nowhere has it had more stern and formidable external difficulties. In the north it has won tens of thousands of converts to its glorious doctrines of general redemption; and this, notwithstanding the most organized and persevering opposition from the most ultra type of Calvinism to be found, perhaps, in any part of our world. It has not only made itself known in all the principal towns in Ulster, but *felt* too; and its influence in liberalizing the tone of Calvinistic preaching and theology has been incalculable. In the south and west it has been confronted and opposed by High Church influence, backed by enormous wealth, aristocratic pride, and indomitable prejudice; and everywhere Popery, like a fearful upas tree, sustained by tens of thousands of pounds from the purse of Protestant England, (‘Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon,’) has opposed its progress. Meantime, without national endowment, without foreign assistance deserving of notice, it has not only maintained its position throughout the land, but has a stronger position, in proportion to the population, now than at any former period of its history. And never had it a more noble, true-hearted, and enterprising band of sons and daughters than at the present hour; and this after having given at least five times its present ministerial staff to the ranks of our Ministry in England, the United States, the Canadas, Eastern British America, Australia, and various parts of our foreign Mission field, and perhaps ten times the number at present enrolled in its membership. Suppose the politico-religious circumstances of the country had been different, so that its sons and daughters were not driven by the stern hand of necessity to seek a home in a foreign land, would not Irish Methodism be, in proportion to the population, by far the most powerful section of the Methodist family on this side of the Atlantic?”

Every sound-hearted Protestant should read, and mark well, Dr. Crook’s concluding observations on Irish Popery. We have room only for one extract: “Am I wrong in saying that both Great Britain and America are at the present hour in fearful danger from the influence of Irish Popery? And are not the Maynooth apostolical bachelors paying off Protestant England smartly for her national apostasy from the God of her fathers? It is

easy for liberal Protestants (so-called) to say, 'We shall meet the crisis when it comes.' 'The CRISIS is now; what will come will prove the CATASTROPHE.' The progress of Popery in England and Scotland in our day is truly alarming, and mainly through Irish Priests and Irish Popery. Dr. Manning regards the ascendancy of Popery in England as so inevitable, from her present position and prospects, that he throws off the mask so long worn gracefully by his lying mistress, and in the face of Protestant England avows the intention of the Popish Church to regain its ancient ascendancy in England, and within a brief period too! He says: 'It is the duty therefore of Catholics to prepare themselves for the future which is before them. They little thought thirty years ago to be as they are now. They little thought ten years ago of the majestic expansion of the Catholic Church at this hour, and of its dignified attitude of calm in the midst of the religious confusion and dissolution which is around it. Still less can we anticipate what the next ten years may bring. The advance of the Church is in geometrical progression.' That this is not an idle boast, but sober matter of fact, an appeal to statistics will prove. The same thing is true, to an alarming extent, in the land of John Knox. 'Throughout Scotland, in 1830, there were not fifty Priests in all; there are now two hundred,--more than four to one! There were then but twenty-five chapels in all; there are now two hundred, besides the cathedrals,--eight to one. There were then no converts; there are now fourteen. There were then no public schools; there are now one hundred and two in efficient working order.' In the light of these figures how suggestive is the fact that one fifth of the entire population of Glasgow are Irish Romanists!"

## CHAPTER X

### THE CONFERENCE OF 1784, AND THE DEED OF DECLARATION

#### THE DEATH OF WESLEY

The Conference of 1784 I take as constituting another epoch in Methodism, inasmuch as—in addition to other important business transacted—by the ordination of Dr. Coke and two other Ministers, provision was made for the successive ordination of Wesleyan Ministers in America; and, by passing the "Deed of Declaration," the permanent settlement of chapel property was effected. No two acts of Mr. Wesley did more than these towards consummating the full and permanent separation from the Established Church. By the former, provision was made for the regular ordination and the perpetuity of the Methodist Ministry; and by the latter, chapels were secured in which their ministrations might be carried on in an uninterrupted manner.

The Conference of 1784 was held at Leeds, and commenced its sittings on July 27<sup>th</sup>. There were now seventy-two Circuits. The number of members in Society was reported to be 64,207, of whom 14,988 were in America. These numbers show an increase on the year, in Great Britain and Ireland, of 3,274. This increase was distributed generally throughout the Circuits. There were also nearly two hundred Travelling Preachers.

*Chapels.*—As before mentioned, one of the great acts of the Conference was that of passing the “Deed of Declaration,” by which all chapel property might be secured to the Connexion for all time to come. This subject had long occupied the serious and anxious attention of Mr. Wesley. But, before stating the manner in which this great and grave subject was arranged, it will be needful to give some account of chapel matters from the commencement; the more so because I have not treated upon the subject in the general course of the narrative.

When the Wesleys and Whitefield were excluded from the churches of the Establishment, they had no other alternative than either to cease preaching, or to preach out of doors, and build chapels, as opportunity offered. They took the latter alternative. Wesley’s first chapel was erected in Bristol, of which Dr. Stevens gives the following account: “His Societies in Bristol grew so rapidly that he was compelled to erect a place of worship for their accommodation; and thus was another step taken forward in the independent career upon which he was being unconsciously led by the providence of God. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, 1739, the corner stone ‘was laid with the voice of praise and thanksgiving.’ This was the first Methodist chapel in the world. He had not the least design of being personally engaged either in the expense or the direction of the work, having appointed ‘eleven feoffees,’ on whom he supposed the burden would fall; but becoming involved in its entire financial responsibility, he was constrained to change this arrangement. And as to the direction of the undertaking, he says he presently received letters from his friends in London, Whitefield in particular, (backed with a message by a person just from the metropolis,) that neither he nor they would have anything to do with the building, nor contribute anything towards it, unless he would instantly discharge all feoffees and do every thing in his own name. Many reasons they gave for this course, but one was decisive with him; namely, that such feoffees always would have it in their power to control him; and, if he preached not as they liked, to turn him out of the house he had built. He accordingly yielded to their advice, and, calling all the feoffees together, cancelled, without opposition, the instrument made before, and took the whole management into his own hands. Money, he says, it is true, he had not, nor any human prospect of procuring it; but he knew ‘the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof,’ and in His name set out, nothing doubting. In this manner was it that the property of all his chapels became vested solely in himself during the early part of his career, a responsibility which was necessary in his peculiar circumstances, which he never abused, and which he transferred, in prospect of his death, by a ‘Deed of Declaration,’ to his Legal Conference. Decisions in the Court of Chancery, made under this document, have given security to the property, and stability to the whole economy of Wesleyan Methodism down to our day.”

The Bristol chapel was the *first erected*, but not the first opened for public worship. That honour belongs to the “Foundery” in London, of ancient celebrity, which was the first building dedicated by the Wesleys to Divine worship. Mr. Jackson supplies the following account of it: “The first chapel that the Wesleys themselves erected was in Bristol; but the first they opened for Divine worship was in London. The history of this place is not a little curious. The chapel was a large unsightly brick building, near the present site of Finsbury Square, and was known by the name of ‘the Foundery.’ It had been in the

occupation of the Government, and used for the purpose of casting brass cannon. Its nearness to London rendered it inconvenient, in consequence of the crowds of people that assembled to witness the process; and a serious accident having occurred, by which some lives were lost, and several persons greatly injured, the business was transferred to Woolwich, and the premises were leased to Mr. Wesley, who fitted up the principal building as a place of worship. The form and character of the erection were changed, but the name was retained. This chapel was a sort of cathedral in Methodism till the year 1777, when it was superseded by the very commodious and elegant chapel in the City Road, which for many years was not unfrequently called 'the New Foundery.' Behind the old Foundery was Mr. Wesley's dwelling-house, the entry to which was through the gallery of the chapel. Here Mr. Wesley resided when he was in London, and here his venerated mother died in the Lord. At one end of the Foundery was a building of one story, which was occupied as a day-school; in another spacious room was a large electrifying machine, which was used on two days every week in the case of the afflicted people who resorted thither for relief; and in another, the publications of the two brothers, in prose and verse, were kept on sale. At the top of the Foundery was a small bell, which was rung as the signal of the preaching at five o'clock in the morning, and of other religious services. This part of London was then open, and unfurnished with lamps; and the Methodist people, men and women, were regularly seen, at that early hour, during the winter season, selecting their steps by the help of a small lantern, and wending their way to the house of prayer, drawn by the well-known sound, and anticipating those lessons of evangelical instruction which their venerated teachers were accustomed to deliver. Mr. Wesley had often preached his morning sermon, performed his early devotions with his people, and was on his way to distant places in the country, before other people had shaken off their slumbers, and were prepared to apply themselves to the duties of life.

"The opening of the Foundery in London, and of the 'Room' in Bristol, was soon followed by the erection of the Orphan-house in Newcastle; and then by chapels of various dimensions in Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, York, Hull, Birmingham, and other populous towns. In these buildings of primitive Methodism, elegance of architecture was little studied. They were 'plain and substantial, intended for use, and not for ornament. The most remarkable circumstance connected with them was, the amplitude of their accommodation for the poor. The pulpits also were large, and contained a bench of considerable length for the use of the Preachers who might be expected successively to address the congregation at the quarterly watch-nights, and other similar services. The preaching in these sanctuaries was plain, pointed, searching, and powerful. The singing was lively; the body of the people generally joined in; and not a few persons in different places were drawn by its sweetness and power to an attendance upon the ministry of the word. The tunes were mostly simple melodies, composed by the old masters, and selected by Mr. Wesley, who published various books of sacred music; and they were sung, if not always according to the rules of art, yet with the spirit and the understanding. The men and women sat apart in the congregation: a practice which Mr. Wesley derived from the Moravians, but which, even in his time, was found to be inconvenient. It was ultimately abandoned. In these assemblies, which were often annoyed by mischievous and riotous people, multitudes of ungodly persons were awakened, converted, regenerated, sanctified, and built up in faith and love."

This quotation gives a particular account of the Founder, and a general statement of the mode in which chapels were erected in other parts, and the style in which the simple, stirring, spiritual worship was conducted. The chapels had increased in number in all places where Wesley and his Itinerants laboured: they were now numerous and of great value. No wonder then that Mr. Wesley should be anxious about their security after his death, as hitherto they had been held in his name, and in that of his brother. So long as he lived, there was no difficulty; but he was now more than eighty years old, and of necessity must soon cease to labour and govern.

No practical purpose would be answered by entering into details about different chapels. I shall therefore content myself with giving an account of the manner in which they were all finally settled at the Conference now under consideration.

This settlement was effected by what was called “the Deed of Declaration,” or “Poll Deed;” a document in which Mr. Wesley constituted the “Legal Conference” as consisting of one hundred Preachers, whose names were inserted in the Deed, which he had enrolled in Chancery, so giving it all the force of a legal document. The Conference was to assemble annually, as long as there were one hundred Preachers in the Connexion, fifty of whom were to form a quorum. The decrease by deaths during the year was to be filled up at each Conference. The plan adopted was for two of every three Ministers to come into the “Legal Hundred” by seniority, and the third by nomination and a vote of the Conference. By this means younger men, of the greatest talent and business power, have been brought in, and their services rendered effective. The honour is prized, and the time of the election is one of excitement. In this manner Mr. Wesley delegated the power which had been possessed by himself to one hundred of his Preachers; thus laying a very broad basis for future action. The power of voting has, however, been extended to all the Preachers who have traveled a certain number of years; but in some cases the vote has to be confirmed by the Legal Hundred; such as the election of President, etc. So long as forty of the Legal Hundred assemble, they have power to appoint Preachers to these chapels; and so long as these Preachers live godly lives, and preach Methodist doctrines, the trustees have no power to exclude them from the pulpits.

This Deed of Declaration was revised in 1832, and now makes full provision for the settlement of all chapel property in what is designated the “Model Deed;” all the particulars relating to which are published in a small volume, which may be consulted by those who take an interest in such matters.

If the question is asked, “To whom do the chapels belong?” the answer is, To no person or body exclusively; but they are held under authority by the Conference on the one part, and by trustees connected with the chapels on the other; and they cannot possibly be alienated except under certain conditions, which make the alienation of a chapel a rare occurrence. The Deed of Declaration gives to the Connexion distinct and independent status; its validity has several times since been assailed, but without effect; and the operations of the Church have been carried on with regularity and success.

Mr. Wesley, however, did not get this “Deed of Declaration” through the Conference without some trouble, in overcoming which all his wisdom and power were severely tried, and the aid of the sainted Fletcher was called into requisition. “The ‘long debate,’” says Dr. Smith, “to which reference is made in the beginning of this paragraph, and ‘in which Mr. Fletcher took much pains,’ was caused by the opposition which was offered to the Deed of Declaration by John Hampson, senior, John Hampson, junior, William Eels, Joseph Pilmoor, and a few others. As previously stated, the first of these Preachers had published a circular, calling on all his fellow-labourers, and the people everywhere to defeat this measure. The principal cause of this violent conduct was undoubtedly the omission of their names from the list inserted in the Deed. This is, indeed, virtually admitted by Hampson, in his ‘Appeal;’ and he confidently expected to raise such a storm of complaint as would enable him to induce Wesley to abrogate or modify the course of action which had been adopted. What was urged in this debate is not known; but there can be no question that it was very earnest and impassioned. If John Hampson ventured to introduce into his speech only a few of the terms of invective and reproach which he printed in his circular, it is very certain that there were men in the Conference who, loving Wesley, and approving of his conduct, would repel such charges with great indignation. It is known that the contention grew so warm, that Mr. Fletcher all but besought the contending parties on his knees to stay the contest, and be reconciled. Principally through his means, an apparent harmony was restored. The four Preachers ‘acknowledged their fault;’ and the Conference proceeded to other business. But this harmony was only in appearance. Every one of these four soon afterward left the Connexion. The elder Hampson became an Independent Minister; the younger obtained ordination in the Established Church, and a living in Sunderland. Me. Ells, some time afterward, joined Mr. Atlay in Dewsbury; and Mr. Pilmoor returned to America, but not in connexion with Wesley. As Mr. Hampson, senior, was old and infirm, and the people among whom he laboured very poor, he was generously allowed twelve pounds a year out of the Preachers’ Fund.”

This allowance to Mr. Hampson was certainly very generous and very liberal, not in the amount given, so much as in the spirit manifested; from which it is evident, that though discussion ran high, yet bitterness and rancour were not mixed up with it, or, if at all, only to a very limited extent. It is, however, very evident that in order thus to carry out his purpose, and render chapel property permanently secure, all the wisdom, patience, and firmness of Wesley were brought into requisition. The result has proved how needful was the action, how far-seeing the plan, and how successful its issue.

### THE DEATH OF WESLEY

The time had now arrived when this distinguished man of God must exchange mortality for life. Though by no means of robust health in early life, he had been spared to an honoured old age; and presented an illustrious example of what may be accomplished by one man, under the guiding, controlling, impelling power of God.

His compeers, Whitefield and his brother Charles, Grimshaw and Perronet, had passed away in triumph long before. He was spared long enough to see the great work which he

had begun extended and spread to an astonishing degree. In March, 1785, he thus speaks of the revival of religion, in which he had acted so prominent a part: "I was now considering how strangely the grain of mustard seed, planted about fifty years ago, has grown up. It has spread through all Great Britain and Ireland, the Isle of Wight, and the Isle of Man; then to America, from the Leeward Islands, through the whole Continent, into Canada and Newfoundland. And the Societies in all these parts walk by one rule, knowing that religion is holy tempers; and striving to worship God, not in form only, but in spirit and in truth."\* (\*Wesley's Works, vol. iv., p. 298)

"Who, I ask in amaze, Hath begotten me these?  
And inquire, from what quarter they came?  
My full heart it replied, They are born from the skies,  
And gives glory to God and the Lamb."

But, although he was spared long enough to witness the wonderful results of his ceaseless labour, it was not too long for the necessary influence of his presence in arranging and consolidating the work so auspiciously commenced, and subsequent events proved how difficult and harassing were the questions and subjects which had to be discussed and settled in order that the work might be perpetuated to succeeding generations.

In the first years of his ministry he had to endure every kind of contumely and opposition; but, long before his departure from this world, the scene had wonderfully changed. "When he first went into Cornwall, accompanied by John Nelson, he plucked the blackberries from the hedges, to allay the cravings of hunger; and slept upon boards, having his saddle-bags for a pillow, till the bones cut through his skin. Now he was received, in that county especially, as an angel of God. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, 1789, on visiting Falmouth, he says, 'The last time I was here, above forty years ago, I was taken prisoner by an immense mob, gaping and roaring like lions. But how is the tide turned! High and low now lined the street, from one end of the town to the other, out of stark love, gaping and staring as if the King were going by.'" This was the man whom the people delighted to honour; and that honour was not limited to one place or locality, but prevailed more or less in every place where he had laboured. It was not confined to one class alone, whether high or low, rich or poor, but was manifested by all classes.

At length, however, natural vigour yielded to the feebleness of age. On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1790, he says, "I am now an old man decayed from head to foot. My eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much; my mouth is hot and dry every morning; I have a lingering fever almost every day; my motion is weak and slow. However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labour. I can preach and write still." This at nearly eighty-seven years of age!

Thus he continued until February, 1791, "when his strength entirely failed; and after languishing a few days, during the whole of which he presented a most edifying example of holy cheerfulness and resignation, he died on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, in great peace. When the hand of death was upon him, he oftener than once repeated, and that with solemn emphasis, these lines:

‘I the chief of sinners am,  
But Jesus died for me.’

And, as the result of that faith in the Lord Jesus, of which these words were the significant expression, he again and again exclaimed, ‘*The best of all is, God is with us.*’”

“*God is with us,*” was his glory and joy in his last hours. When nearly exhausted, he lifted up his dying arm in token of victory, and “raising his feeble voice in a holy triumph not to be expressed, he again repeated, “The best of all is, God is with us.” In these last moments he also said, “He causeth His servants to lie down in peace.” “The clouds drop fatness.” “The Lord is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” “I’ll praise, I’ll praise.” “The next morning the closing scene drew near. Joseph Bradford, his faithful and well-tried friend, prayed with him; and the last word he was heard to utter was ‘Farewell.’ While several of his friends were kneeling round his bed, without a groan, this man of God, this beloved Pastor of thousands, entered into the joy of his Lord.” This was a fitting close to so holy and beautiful, so laborious and useful a life.

His funeral was an occasion on which multitudes testified their love for the departed and their sorrow at their loss. The Rev. Thomas Jackson, in his “Centenary of Wesleyan Methodism,” gives the following account of the event: “Few men have been more honoured in their death than this venerable servant of the Lord. On the day preceding his interment his remains were, according to his own directions, placed in the chapel near his dwelling-house in London; and the crowds that went to see them were so great, that business was generally suspended in the City Road, and it was with great difficulty that any carriage could pass. His funeral took place early in the morning, lest any accident should occur, in consequence of the vast concourse of people which was otherwise expected to attend. When the officiating Clergyman at the grave side pronounced the words, ‘Inasmuch as it hat pleased Almighty God to take unto Himself the soul of our dear *father* here departed,’ the people, who nearly filled the burying-ground, burst into loud weeping; and it is believed that scarcely a dry eye was to be seen in the entire assembly.”

The inscription on the marble tablet to his memory in City Road chapel is at once historical and expressive, in few words, of the character, piety, labours, and successes of this eminent man of God. It is as follows:

“The best of all is, God is with us.”

Sacred to the Memory of

THE REV. JOHN WESLEY, M.A.,

Sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford.

A man, in learning and sincere piety,  
Scarcely inferior to any:



In zeal, ministerial labours, and extensive usefulness,  
Superior, perhaps, to all men, since the days of St. Paul.  
Regardless of fatigue, personal danger, and disgrace,  
He went out into the highways and hedges,  
Calling sinners to repentance,  
And publishing the Gospel of Peace.

He was the Founder of the Methodist Societies,  
And the chief Promoter and Patron  
Of the plan of Itinerant Preaching,  
Which he extended through Great Britain and Ireland,  
The West Indies, and America, with unexampled success.  
He was born the XVII of June, MDCCIII,  
And died the II of March, MDCCXCI,  
In sure and certain hope of eternal life,  
Through the Atonement and Mediation of  
A Crucified Saviour.

He was sixty-five years in the Ministry,  
And fifty-two an Itinerant Preacher;  
He lived to see in these kingdoms only,  
About three hundred Itinerant,  
And one thousand Local, Preachers,  
Raised up from the midst of his own people,  
And eighty thousand persons in the societies under his care.  
His name will be ever had in grateful remembrance  
By all who rejoice in the universal spread  
Of the Gospel of Christ

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Though Charles Wesley died a few years previously to his brother, it will not be out of place to give here the inscription on the tablet to his memory in the same chapel; it being no less expressive and characteristic than the one just quoted.

“God buries his workmen, but carries on his work.”

Sacred to the Memory of

THE REV. CHARLES WESLEY, M.A.,

Educated at Westminster School,

And Sometime Student at Christ Church, Oxford.

As a Preacher

He was eminent for ability, zeal, and usefulness,  
 Being learned without pride,  
 And pious without ostentation;  
 To the sincere, diffident Christian,  
 A Son of Consolation;  
 But to the vain boaster, the hypocrite, and the profane,  
 a Son of Thunder  
 He was the first who received the name of  
 Methodist;  
 And, uniting with his brother, the Rev. John Wesley,  
 In the plan of Itinerant Preaching,  
 Endured hardship, persecution, and disgrace,  
 As a good Soldier of JESUS CHRIST;  
 Contributing largely, by the usefulness of his labours,  
 To the first formation of the Methodist Societies  
 In these Kingdoms,  
 As a Christian Poet, he stood unrivalled;  
 And his Hymns will convey instruction and consolation  
 To the faithful in CHRIST JESUS,  
 As long as the English Language shall be understood.  
 He was born the XVIII of December MDCCVIII,  
 And died the XXIX of March MDCCLXXXVIII,  
 A firm and pious Believer in the Doctrines of the Gospel,  
 And a sincere Friend to the Church of England.

If these two wonderful men are permitted to look down from their lofty seats, and witness what transpires in this lower world, with what rapture must they behold the ever-widening and extending successes of the Gospel of Christ! Even this spot (Annshaw) where I now write was for untold ages the dwelling-place of the dark and cruel heathen; but it is now won to Christ; and the hallelujahs of hundres of saved Kaffirs ascent to heaven, and rise accepted in the skies, perfumed with the incense of the Saviour's merits.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE CONFERENCE OF 1797

The Conferences of 1795 and 1797 form another important epoch in the history of Methodism. In the last chapter we gave the closing scene of Mr. Wesley's laborious and useful life, but no account of the last Conference which he attended. Before recording what occurred immediately after his death, it is needful to notice the progress which had been made when that event occurred. The last Conference at which this venerable patriarch was present, was held in Bristol, commencing on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1790, and was the forty-seventh from the beginning. Of this Conference Dr. Smith writes as follows:

“As the state of the Connexion at this Conference must be taken as its condition and extent at the death of Wesley, it may be desirable to be more than usually particular in the statement, and to go rather more into detail than would otherwise be necessary. The following table presents a summary view of the number of Preachers and members in the Methodist Societies at this Conference.

Countries	Circuits	Preachers	Members
England	65	195	52,832
Ireland	29	67	14,106
Wales	3	7	566
Scotland	8	18	1,086
Isle of Man	1	3	2,580
Norman Isles	2	4	498
West India Isles	7	13	4,500
British America	4	6	800
United States	97	198	43,265
TOTALS	216	511	120,233

“The work had now attained such magnitude and importance, as to demand in its several departments more careful oversight than any man of Wesley’s age could supply, or than could be afforded by any annual inspection at the Conferences. This oversight it was wisely determined to supply by the appointment of Committees, as circumstances rendered them necessary. At this time a Committee was appointed for the management of the West India Missions. It was composed of Dr. Thomas Coke, Alexander Mather, Thomas Rankin, James Rogers, Henry Moore, Adam Clarke, John Baxter, William Warrener, and Matthew Lamb.

“A building Committee for England was also appointed, consisting of Alexander Mather, John Pawson, Thomas Rankin, William Thompson, William Jenkins, and the London Assistant.

“A similar Committee was also appointed for Ireland, of which Andrew Blair, Adam Clarke, Thomas Rutherford, and Thomas Mitchell were the members.”

Soon after the death of Mr. Wesley, the difficulties of the new and altered state of things began to be felt. He left the following brief and characteristic letter to be read at the first Conference after his decease.

“TO THE METHODIST CONFERENCE

“CHESTER, *April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1785.*

“My Dear Brethren,

“Some of our Travelling Preachers have expressed a fear, that, after my decease, you would exclude them either from preaching in connexion with you, or from some other privilege which they now enjoy. I know no other way to preven any such inconvenience, than to leave these, my last words, with you.

“I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you never avail yourselves of the ‘Deed of Declaration,’ to assume any superiority over your brethren; but let all things go on, among those Itinerants who choose to remain together, exactly in the same manner as when I was with you, so far as circumstances will permit.

“In particular, I beseech you, if you ever loved me, and if you now love God and your brethren, to have no respect of persons, in stationing the Preachers, in choosing children for Kingswood school, in disposing of the yearly Contribution, and the Preachers’ Fund, or any other public money. But do all things with a single eye, as I have done from the beginning. Go on thus, doing all things without prejudice or partiality, and God will be with you to the end.

“John Wesley.”

This letter, short and general as it is, discloses Mr. Wesley’s intense concern for the future welfare of his Societies: but it was by no means adequate to meet the exigency of the case. Some have held that one of Mr. Wesley’s most serious defects was, that of not making more full and complete provision for the well-being of his system after his death. The whole of what he had done was *preparatory*; and so long as he was present to guide and work it, all went on well: but after he was taken away, serious difficulties beset the path of those who had to legislate on Church organization. He had proceeded too far to allow his people to recede and become absorbed in the National Church, and not far enough to enable the Connexion to advance with steadiness and safety. In fact, the Conference was not in a position to legislate, when legislation was most needed. It might have been able to execute or carry out what had been previously arranged and prepared, but lacked the unity and authority essential to organize a regular system of Church polity, and to make such new regulations as were needed by the altered circumstances in which the Methodist Connexion was placed.

The divided sentiments and feelings of Wesley’s followers may be classed under three heads. First: *the conservatives*, or High Church party, with Dr. Coke at their head. These were desirous, under certain conditions, to return to and be absorbed in the Establishment. Dr. Coke made proposals to that effect, but they were rejected by the dignitaries of the Establishment. “The conservatives,” says Stevens, “included most of the trustees of chapels, as these were generally chosen from the most wealthy members of the Societies, and were therefore most likely to be influenced, by their social position, in favour of the national Church. They were, indeed, the ‘High Church’ lay aristocracy of Methodism, distinguishable, as such, from the mass of the people who demanded the sacraments, and from the ultra democratic party represented by Kilham. By extensive consultations and correspondence they prepared to exert their influence, if not their official power, against all liberal changes. They met by delegations at Bristol, before the

session of the Conference there. They claimed a larger control than had been conceded them over the affairs of the Societies, and particularly the right of a veto on the sacraments in the chapels. They denounced the meeting at Lichfield, demanded that the Preachers should abandon all ecclesiastical titles, cease to administer the sacraments, abjure ordinations, and divide more equally with the trustees the administration of the affairs of the Church.” The carrying out of these proposals would have been fatal to Methodism, and ultimately they were rejected by the Conference.

The Second class consisted of those who might be designated *the progressive party*. The policy of this large and preponderating class was to carry out Mr. Wesley’s plan of availing themselves of the openings and calls of Providence as to their future operations. “The devout spirit of the Conference of 1791 pervaded all its proceedings. Its members were too deeply impressed with the sense of their critical position to allow unhallowed passions to affect their doings, or to suffer irritating language to escape their lips. At the examination of twelve candidates, the older Preachers wept around them as the pledges of future success; at their public reception similar emotions prevailed in the congregation. Entwisle, who was one of the received probationers, describes the scene as peculiarly solemn: ‘Hopper, whose usefulness, age, wisdom, and experience, rendered him truly venerable, opened the meeting by prayer; he prayed till he could pray no longer for weeping. Preachers and people seemed to have similar feelings, and the whole congregation felt the Divine power in a very remarkable manner. For my own part, I felt what I never did before. I seemed to receive a new commission, and I do believe that I experienced something of what Paul speaks of in 1 Tim. Iv. 14.’ An early historian of Methodism says: ‘The business being ended, the Conference broke up. Great was the comfort of the Preachers, that such a foundation was laid for the peace and prosperity of the Societies. The Lord they saw was better to them than their boding fears. His servants were of one heart and one mind. The voice of thanksgiving ascended up on high, and they departed to their usual Circuits blessing and praising God.’

“The pledge of the Conference to ‘follow strictly Mr. Wesley’s plan’ was vague, and was variously interpreted. The controversy could not but be resumed, and more definite results must be reached before the Church could be at rest. Partisans of the national Church regarded the pledge as ginding the Methodists to the Establishment; the advocates of progress dissented, and, in the language of Pawson, declared, ‘No so; our old plan has been to follow the openings of Providence, and to alter or amend the plan as we saw it needful, in order to be more useful in the hand of God.’ Hanby, whom Wesley had authorized to administer the sacraments, still claimed the right to do so wherever the Societies wished him. Pawson wrote, the same year, that if the people were denied the sacraments, they would leave the Connexion in many places. Taylor was determined to administer them at Liverpool; and Atmore wrote, that having ‘solemnly promised upon his knees, before God and His people, that he would give all diligence, not only to preach the word, but to administer the sacraments in the Church of God,’ he would do so, wherever required by the people.”

The Third class may be characterized as the *ultra liberals*, of whom Mr. Kilham, who was afterwards expelled, was the leading spirit. These sought immediate and entire

separation from the Established Church, and the full organization of an independent Methodist Church. This party was also defeated; and Mr. Kilham, who was removed from the Conference in 1796, established a new sect, called "The New Connexion Methodists," which still exists, and has a large number of Preachers and members.

The classes here enumerated had not only their own peculiar views, but several please which might be fairly urged in support of their views. Hence the difficulty of legislation. Had the Established Church of England possessed a little more moderation, liberality, and wisdom, it might have absorbed into itself at this time much of the rising intelligence and wealth of Methodism. But the Episcopal hierarch knew not the golden opportunity, but rudely repulsed or coldly slighted all overtures, and the opportunity returned no more. Many of the Episcopalians have, since those days, desired a liberal plan of incorporation; but in vain; there is no place for reparation, if there is for repentance.

The moderate party prevailed, after seven years of toil and struggle. The conflict was conducted with great spirit, but upon the whole with wonderful moderation. (See the Histories of Methodism by Dr. Smith and Dr. Stevens.)

It is not improbable that the type in Mr. Wesley's mind, if he had a type at all, was that of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America. In the formation of that Church, he ordained Dr. Coke Bishop, who ordained Asbury; and the succession has been continued ever since. In England, also, he ordained Mather as Superintendent, in addition to the Presbyters, with the design probably that he and Dr. Coke should ordain others, and that thus in England, as well as in America, there should be a Methodist Episcopal Church. This was also a favourite project with Dr. Coke, but he failed to get it carried into execution. Probably he calculated upon being the successor of Wesley, and expected to be the President of the first Conference after his death; and possibly he was disappointed by his non-election by his brethren to that office. Instead of making that appointment they place William Thompson in the chair, and constituted the Doctor Secretary for several years in succession. There could not be two John Wesleys, and the Founder of Methodism could have no successor. It was not till 1797 that Dr. Coke was raised to the presidency.

At the Conference of 1795 a general "Plan of Pacification" was, after much discussion, adopted: but this did not fully meet the case. It formed the basis, however, upon which more satisfactory action afterwards took place; but not until the Conference of 1797 was the whole subject fully and amicably arranged.

"Many of the trustees of the Connexion were still dissatisfied with its government. A week before the next Conference sixty-seven delegates from them met at Leeds to make further demands. The Conference itself assembled there, according to appointment, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, 1797, the trustees being still in session. Never, says an historian of Methodism, had the Methodist Preachers entered upon the work of their annual assembly under circumstances of so much difficulty and danger to the Connexion. Dr. Coke was chosen President, and Samuel Bradburn Secretary. The Minutes enrolled 399 Preachers; 23 were received on probation; 3 ceased to travel; 3 had died since the previous session.

The Circuits numbered 145, being a gain of two. The British Islands reported 99,519 members of Society; their increase was 4,293; the British North American Provinces and the West Indies reported 8,742, showing a decrease of 911. The total membership under the jurisdiction of the Conference was 108,261; the total increase was 3,382.”

The spirit in which the negotiations between the trustees and the Conference were carried on, is thus depicted by Dr. Stevens: “The most critical part of the business of the session related to the demands of the assembled trustees; it was conducted during nine or ten days with as much cordiality as dignity, by written communications and Committees from both bodies, and the final agreements were so satisfactory to both that the convention of trustees adjourned, declaring by formal resolution its thanks to the Conference, and the determination of the delegates to ‘support the Methodist cause on the plan agreed on by the Conference;’ and the Conference voted that ‘we do sincerely return you our thanks for your candid and Christian-like conduct throughout the whole of your proceedings in the character of representatives of the trustees. We join our hands and hearts with yours, and trust we shall all of us continue faithful till death in the good old cause, which many of you and us have so long been engaged in, and in which we are determined to spend our strength and lives. To God’s holy keeping we recommend you.’ Thus did the tossed and driven bark come forth from the protracted storm. ‘The division of the body,’ says a Methodist authority, [Dr. Smith,] ‘which enemies to its prosperity, both within and without, ardently desired, was entirely averted; and Preachers and people, released from vexatious and unprofitable wrangling, were able to pursue their true and proper calling of building up believers, and spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land.’ The result of the struggle was most salutary, not only in the restoration of harmony, but, if possible, more so, as giving a consolidated government to Wesleyan Methodism, by which it has not only survived later strifes, but has extended its sway with increasing energy, more or less, around the world, and which in our day, after more than half a century of labours and struggles, remains as effective a system of Church polity as Protestant Christendom affords. The fact that it is due as much to the moderation and concessive spirit as to the firmness of the good and great men who conducted Methodism through this formidable struggle, presents a lesson which should never be forgotten by their successors.”

The final results are thus summarized: “The adjustment of 1797 was essentially the completion of the Plan of Pacification of 1795. The combined results of both were: that the supremacy of the Conference, as designed by Wesley—its right to appoint the Preachers to Circuits, and its control of the pulpits of the Church—was maintained; a majority of the trustees, stewards, and Leaders of any Circuit having, however, power to demand a meeting of the Preachers and other officers of the Circuit to examine a Preacher whose disqualifications might render him unfit for the appointment, he being subject to removal if a majority of the meeting should condemn him, and subject to suspension till the next Conference, if he should refuse to submit to their decision. The sacraments were accorded with restrictions which could not finally prevent their general administration. The Conference pledged itself to publish annual accounts of the yearly collections. All accounts of deficits in the allowance of Preachers, which the Circuits did not meet, were to be presented in the Circuit Quarterly Meetings, and to be endorsed by

the Circuit stewards; these claims having been heretofore reported by the Preacher only to the District Meetings, which were composed of Preachers, and were often at a distance from the local Quarterly Meetings. The District Meetings were allowed to decide no other temporal business without the consent of the Quarterly Meetings of the District. No person was to be admitted to the Society by the Preacher or otherwise if the Leaders' Meeting had declared the candidate inadmissible, and no member was to be expelled unless the charges against him were proved before the Leader's Meeting. A steward or Leader could not be appointed or displaced against the will of the Leaders' Meeting. No Local Preacher could be placed upon the Plan of Local Preachers' appointments without the consent of the Local Preachers' Meeting. If at any time the Conference should deem it proper to enact any new rule for the Societies, and such rule should be objected to in the first Quarterly Meeting in any Circuit, and if the majority of the meeting, in conjunction with the Preachers, be of opinion that the enforcement of the rule would be injurious to the prosperity of the Circuit, it need not be enforced before the next Conference; nevertheless the Quarterly Meeting, refusing a new rule, should not, by publications, public meetings, or otherwise, make it a cause of contention, but must strive by every means to preserve the peace of the Connexion."

The general principles of the Connexion here laid down have been the guide and basis of Methodism ever since; with such alterations, modifications, and additions, as the altered circumstances of the body have called for.

Having given a general and connected account of these long struggles, with the final adjustment and settlement of the great difficulties which were now surmounted, it is proper to trace these gratifying results to the special assistance and guidance of Almighty God. Throughout these pages, I have endeavoured to show that Methodism was pre-eminently *a spiritual work*, based upon the conversion of John Wesley to God, and the gradual development of those Divine plans which were carried into operation by him and his assistants, with this one object, "to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world." The period from the death of Mr. Wesley to the Conference of 1797 was the most difficult and critical in the history of Methodism; but, as an able writer observes concerning the first Conference, "The devout spirit of the Conference saved it." God, not man, bore it safely through the ordeal.

Let us look for a few moments at the manner and spirit in which these perplexed but godly men met the crisis and sought to pass through it. How earnestly they endeavoured to set aside party motives and personal interests, seeking guidance from God by fasting and prayer! Take an instance in the Conference of 1795, of which Dr. Stevens related: "After this stormy year the Preachers resorted to their next session with intense anxiety, believing that deliverance must be there providentially vouchsafed to them, or their trials culminate in a general explosion of their organization. The session began at Manchester, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1795. Joseph Bradford, the traveling companion of Wesley, was chosen President, and Dr. Coke Secretary. Oppressed by the perils which beset it, the Conference devoted its first day to fasting and prayer. It had reached a crisis, and the Divine Providence which had so long tested it, as in the fire, was about to lead it out of its consuming agitations; not, indeed, suddenly, but surely. Entwisle, who was present,



wrote home that he ‘never saw so much love among the Preachers before.’ After powerful preliminary sermons on the Sabbath, the Conference met at five o’clock on Monday morning and began their devotions, which were continued till seven; again they assembled at eight, and continued together till ten; at twelve they re-assembled, and spent two hours in prayer; after which the Preachers, by themselves, partook of the Lord’s Supper. ‘It would rejoice your heart,’ says Entwisle, ‘to see how all former things are laid aside, and the persons concerned declare that they will not forgive, but forget former grievances, and never mention them more.’”

The character of the men who under God brought about these great results was of a high order. There were the veterans, who had marched side by side with Wesley for many years, had fought under his banner, and achieved glorious victories under his leadership. Amongst them were William Thompson, the first President of the Conference; Cownley, Moore, and Mather, who were ordained by the apostolic hands of Wesley; Hopper, Pawson, and Atmore, who had laboured long and hard and well. Amongst the men of the day who were there in their manly prime were Dr. Coke, Benson, Samuel BRadburn, Taylor, and Adam Clarke, who was just becoming a man of mark, and had yet a long and honourable career to run, enriching the literature of the Church and of the world by drawing from the ample stores of his vast and varied learning. The men of the future were Richard Watson, who brought his profound thought and solid piety to bear upon the theology of Wesleyan Methodism; Jabez Bunting, the great legislator of the body, with his clear-sightedness and conclusive reasoning; Robert Newton, with his manly form, his sonorous voice, his wondrous eloquence; Joseph Entwisle, with his childlike simplicity and angelic piety. These, with a large number of other worthies, constituted the men of the past, the workers of the present, and the promise of the future.

What is further remarkable is, that during these years of distraction and trial God in a wonderful manner poured out His Holy Spirit. The word of the Preachers was attended with great power; thousands were subdued and saved, and added to the Society; so that the annual increase in the number of members was large. This is the best proof which can be given that the men who strove did not do so for party purposes, but to secure what they believed to be the best ends; and hence God made abundant use of them as instruments in carrying out His work. Their success in their holy employment served to strengthen their confidence in God, being the pledge and assurance that ultimately He would work deliverance for them from their manifold perplexities.

## CHAPTER XII

### JOHN WESLEY’S SCRIPTURAL CONVERSION THE TRUE ORIGIN OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH

The heading of this chapter may be considered by some to contain a bold assertion. Be it so, but the assertion is sustained by fact. The Wesleyan Church has now grown into a complete and separate ecclesiastical organization, with its own regularly appointed

Ministry, well defined polity, and mighty action; but the foundation of the whole was laid in Mr. Wesley's scriptural conversion to God; that conversion being based upon Christ, the Rock of Ages. I am not ignorant of, nor indifferent to, the prominent part which Charles Wesley and George Whitefield took in the early work of Methodism; they laboured, suffered, triumphed. But when Charles Wesley saw the manner in which his brother John departed more and more from the Established Church, he ceased to co-operate with him as an Itinerant. The Wesleyan Church has, however, a legacy of priceless value which he bequeathed to it and the world, in his spiritual psalmody. Whitefield drifted into Calvinism, and became associated with Lady Huntingdon; so that ultimately the result of his labours was absorbed mostly in Dissenting Churches. Thus John Wesley alone must be taken as the founder of that Christian denomination which bears his name, and perpetuates his labours. Nothing could be further from his desire and intention than to found such a Church. He was profoundly, and some think inconsistently, attached to the Established Church: yet he practically, though not formally, left that body, and established a separate Christian organization, which since his death has only become more clearly defined and more fully developed. Yet, throughout life, he tried to reconcile this course of action with his position as a member of the Establishment.

It has been broadly affirmed by some modern Episcopal Church Ministers and Missionaries, that the present "self-styled" Wesleyan Church is "renegade;" that, in fact, it properly belongs to the Establishment. They would thus, one great claim, swallow up all those persons who have been gathered in through Wesleyan instrumentality. They affirm, "Mr. Wesley was a Churchman, and by sequence all his followers belong to the Church; and we have a right to them." Such reasoning may appear very futile to Englishmen who are well instructed in the technicalities of Church government; but it is not quite so easy for partially instructed African converts or ignorant Europeans to understand the real merits of the case. It will therefore be no matter of surprise, if a little prominence and distinctness is here given to this subject.

The conversion of Mr. Wesley to God is the basis of the Wesleyan Church; but *his conversion did not take place in the National Church at all, but was brought about by an instrumentality that had no connexion with that Church, namely, the Moravians.* The real ground or cause of Mr. Wesley's future action was, his discovering the plan of salvation by faith in Christ, and adopting that plan; his being born again of the Holy Ghost, and being made a new creature in Christ Jesus; his being filled with the burning love of God, and being constrained by this love to seek the salvation of others. He was thus rightly designated "the modern Apostle of experimental religion." Had it not been for his conversion, he might have been the polished collegian, the astute logician, the profound philosopher, the learned linguist, and the consecrated Priest. But, without this, he could not have been the author of a great religious movement, such as that which then sprang forth, and has since been sustained. He might have been a High Churchman, a consummate ritualist, a semi or real Papist, but no more.

His conversion did not take place in the Establishment; nor could it take place there, in the nature of things. The stream cannot rise above the fountain, and we are not acquainted with any leading Divines in the Established Church at that time, who either knew or

taught the plan of salvation by faith in Christ without the works of the law; and consequently what they did not know, they could not possibly teach. Those who have the opportunity of perusing the works of that period will see how fully these remarks are borne out by the printed theology of that day.

No; the Established Church was defective, was inadequate to the task,--could not meet the emergency. Therefore was it that God, having a great work to accomplish, brought Wesley and others into contact with the Moravians, who were able to "teach them the way of God more perfectly." Hence this great work of God was from without, or beyond the pale of the Establishment; and the foundation of this great spiritual edifice and ecclesiastical structure was not laid in the Episcopal Church, but on the broader base of a cosmopolitan plan, bringing within its range, not only another Church, but also another nation; incorporating Germans and Germany, and in them and through them all Churches "built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone."

Let not the reader for a moment suppose that I am indifferent to the other great agencies employed in the preparation of this distinguished instrument. No; maternal care, Oxford learning, and Moravian spirituality were required in the adaptation of this polished shaft. Mrs. Wesley fostered the opening genius, and moulded the methodical mind. The Charterhouse School and Oxford University gave mental culture, scholarly polish, and solid erudition. But Moravian simplicity and spirituality took all these golden preparations, brought them to the cross, and laid them on "that altar which sanctifieth the gift." Then the mighty impulse of converting grace sent forth this special instrument, and caused it to effect a wonderful and lasting work.

Divine grace was the central spring of all the greatness, goodness, and usefulness of John Wesley. The power which he wielded was the power of God; so that, when brought into contact with Church order, the force and upheavings of his sanctified soul were too great to be controlled or restrained by ecclesiastical surroundings. Thus, when the first great shock of closing church doors against him came, he exclaimed, "It were better for me to die than not preach the Gospel; yea, and even in the fields, either when I may not preach in the church, or when the church will not contain the congregation." What might not be expected from such a man, acting in accordance with, and prompted by, such Divine impulses! How bold and eloquent was the challenge to those who opposed him, in the following words!

"Suppose field-preaching to be ever so expedient, or even necessary; yet who will contest with us for this province? May we not enjoy this quiet and unmolested? Unmolested, I mean, by any competitors. For who is there among you, brethren, that is willing (examine your own hearts) even to save souls from death at this price? Would not you let a thousand souls perish, rather than you would be the instrument of rescuing them thus? I do not speak now with regard to conscience, but to the inconveniences that must accompany it. Can you sustain them if you would? Can you bear the summer sun to beat upon your naked head? Can you suffer the wintry rain or wind, from whatever quarter it blows? Are you able to stand in the open air, without any covering or defence, when God

casteth abroad His snow like wool, or scattereth His hoar-frost like ashes? And yet these are some of the smallest inconveniences which accompany field-preaching. Far beyond all these are the contradiction of sinners, the scoffs both of the great vulgar and the small; contempt and reproach of very kind; often more than verbal affronts, stupid, brutal violence; sometimes to the hazard of health, or limbs, or life. Brethren, do you envy us this honour? What, I pray, would buy you to be a Field-Preacher? Or what, think you, could induce any man of common sense to continue therein one year, unless he had a full conviction in himself that it was the will of God concerning him?"

What is still more remarkable is, that not only did the Established Church *not* bring about the conversion of the Wesleys and Whitefield, but, when they were converted and prepared for extensive usefulness, the Church did not employ them, but *cast them from its pale*. Either judicial blindness, or rigid order, or godless indifference, induced the Clergy of the National Church to oppose, instead of encouraging this great movement. Had they encouraged it, it might probably have been absorbed in the Establishment. In this respect they had not the clear-sightedness or political acumen of the Church of Rome, which, when Loyola arose, instead of thrusting him out, saw at once how he might be incorporated in it, and made subservient to its great designs. The Society of Jesuits was formed, and its propagandism has effected more for the fallen and corrupt Church of Rome than any other agency. But it was far different with Wesley and his coadjutors: they were rejected from the pulpits of the State Church, and in many instances, the godless Clergy became the instigators and abettors of bitter and barbarous persecution. Wesley's original intention was, to impart spiritual life and power to the Establishment, not to separate from it; but in this he was disappointed and defeated; he and his work were thrown off, as an oppressive incubus, or as an unwelcome appendage; and hence arose by natural steps, providentially marked out, the present WESLEYAN CHURCH.

### CHAPTER XIII

#### METHODISM A SCRIPTURAL CHURCH

