

JONATHAN SWIFT AND THE WESLEYS

AT MIDNIGHT on Tuesday 22nd October 1745 the remains of Jonathan Swift were buried privately in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, by the side of his beloved 'Stella', Esther Johnson, who had died seventeen years before. In accordance with his own injunctions, the austere ceremony was scrambled through without any of the pomp that later ages—and, indeed, his own—would have accorded as his right. To tell the truth, no personal mourners were left. His small circle of friends had already disintegrated. Even to the public he had been as good as dead for about five years, and for the last three years had been legally adjudged incapable of conducting his affairs. It was his lot, as he had feared it might be, to die 'like a poisoned rat in a hole'. He managed a last snarl at the end, however. His will, made in 1740, gave directions for an inscription over his tomb on a black marble tablet, 'in large letters, deeply cut and strongly gilded', announcing that he had gone 'where fierce disdain no longer wounds the heart' (*ubi saeva indignatio ulterius cor lacerare nequit*).

John Wesley and Jonathan Swift had much in common—more than is apparent at first glance. They stood almost alone in their day as men of great position in England who were yet deeply and practically interested in the welfare of despised Ireland. Much more were they alike in their hatred of all that was shoddy and unjust. Both were reformers at heart—aghast at abuses which they were determined to amend. Moral indignation has not always been allowed as a trait of Dean Swift's strangely-compounded character, but his literary genius can never fully be understood apart from this characteristic. In the very reforms they advocated there was similarity. Swift anticipated Wesley in lending small sums of money free of interest to deserving tradesmen who were in financial difficulties, which Wesley was later to elevate into a regular system, in his Foundery 'Lending Stock'. Wesley's time and attention were constantly engaged in works of charity, including the care of the sick; the same is largely true of Swift, and the money he left went to found a hospital for fifty patients. In Wesley's case, of course, there was very little to leave, his money having been used up for others during his life-time. Both Wesley and Swift warned the public against rapacious and unscrupulous Lawyers, both having first of all suffered by reason of their dealings with the law. Swift's championship of Ireland against exploitation, as seen in the Wood's Half-pence affair, is paralleled by Wesley's early defence of the American Colonies against English taxation—even though Dr Samuel Johnson's tract *Taxation no Tyranny* was later to convince him that his former attitude was mistaken. Both Swift and Wesley endeavoured to uphold the honour of the Established Church, though in quite different ways, and with far different results; both were animated by a strong distrust of Dissent. Both, of course, were clergymen.

For their purpose of reform, Swift and Wesley used the same literary weapon in a similar way. They issued a swarm of cheap pamphlets aimed at the common people, Swift's being usually anonymous, and Wesley's being very often so. The writings of both men were couched in direct, incisive English that was quite at variance with the general literary practice of their age, and a means of reform in itself. Incidentally, each of them tried his hand at stabilizing English literary usage, Swift in his *Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue*,

Wesley in *The Complete English Dictionary*. . . . By a Lover of Good English and Common Sense.

Although there are numerous, obvious, and important differences between the Fellow of Lincoln College and the Dean of St Patrick's, by special pleading even some of these contrasts might be twisted into comparisons. Swift's misanthropy, for instance, could easily be linked up with Wesley's conviction of the hopeless sinfulness of man apart from God. That there is real ground for comparison is enough, however, for our present purpose.

It so happens that the Wesley family as a whole had links more or less direct with Dean Swift. When young Jonathan was a poor relation befriended by the great Sir William Temple, he fell under the spell of the *Athenian Mercury*, a kind of seventeenth-century *Notes and Queries*. This, of course, was run by the Rev. Samuel Wesley, Rector of Epworth, in conjunction with his brother-in-law John Dunton, and Richard Sault, with the occasional assistance of the Rev. John Norris. So enthusiastic did young Swift become about the erudition displayed by the 'Athenian Society', as the sponsors of this periodical called themselves, that he ventured to try out his poetic wings in a fight that was far too lofty for him, a Pindaric *Ode to the Athenian Society*. It was this that induced John Dryden to incur Swift's hatred by saying: 'Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet.' The opinion is endorsed by a more disinterested modern critic, Mr Ricardo Quintana, who speaks of it as 'unquestionably the worst thing Swift ever wrote'. Did Samuel Wesley's heart swell with pride as he read the concluding lines of praise for the anonymous authors of the *Athenian Mercury*?

*And to all future mankind show
How strange a paradox is true,
That men who lived and died without a name
Are the chief heroes in the sacred lists of fame.*

Whilst in his feeble poetic beginnings Swift praised John Wesley's father without knowing it, when he got into his satiric stride the same Samuel Wesley was one of the butts of his ridicule. One of Swift's first prose publications, which by itself would have made his name a lasting one, was *A Full and True Account of the Battel (sic) Fought last Friday, Between the Ancient and the Modern Books in St James's Library*, more popularly known as *The Battle of the Books*. In this Swift chivalrously defends his benefactor Sir William Temple, now chiefly remembered as the recipient of the letters of Dorothy Osborne, who later became his wife. Temple is portrayed as the champion of sound classical learning and taste against the swarming pedants and commentators of modern days. Amongst the latter is numbered Samuel Wesley, whose pretensions to merit are dismissed very quickly: Then Homer slew Wesley with a kick of his Horse's heel.

The 'Table, or Key' to the 1720 edition of the *Battle* gives the following synopsis of Homer's contribution to the slaughter of the 'Moderns':

Homer overthrows Gondibert; Kills Denham & Westly, Perrault & Fontenelle.

(One notes in passing the uncertainty in the spelling of the name which had been changed from the ancestral Westley to Wesley: the old spelling persisted for a time even with Samuel Wesley's more illustrious sons.) The fact that to Homer

was assigned the despatch of Wesley suggests that Swift had in mind the great folio which is supposed to have brought the Epworth preferment to its author, *The Life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: an Heroic Poem in Ten Books*, published in 1693. This epic work also achieved for Wesley a niche in Pope's *Dunciad*, though Pope later relented, and amended the passage. Swift also seems to have changed his mind about the Rector of Epworth, or rather to have forgotten his literary prejudice in pity for the poverty-stricken *paterfamilias*. When Wesley's *magnum opus*, the *Dissertationes in Librum Jobi*, appeared many years later, Swift was numbered amongst those who strove to help its author to ensure good sales by allowing his own name to appear on the 'List of Subscribers'.

Whether as a sign of Christian forgiveness, or out of genuine literary appreciation, all Samuel Wesley's children were brought up to read and admire the works of Dean Swift, according to Mr G. J. Stevenson's *Memorials of the Wesley Family*, though not without just criticism of their irreligious and immoral tendencies. Samuel Wesley, junior, who himself became a minor poet of some repute, whilst an usher at Westminster School (again on the authority of Mr Stevenson) 'enjoyed much intercourse with the Tory poets and politicians, and was on intimate terms of friendship with Harley, Earl of Oxford, Pope, Swift, and Prior'. There is some doubt, however, whether his contact with Swift was very intimate, although Adam Clarke averred that Samuel Wesley, junior, was 'highly esteemed by Swift'.

It seems likely that John Wesley had no personal dealings with Swift, who was thirty-six years his senior, and well past his heyday when Wesley was approaching full maturity. The Dean of St Patrick's may have met the young Oxford don, already a Fellow of Lincoln College, whilst on his last visit to England during the summer of 1727. Wesley's unpublished Oxford diaries may show that he did—but we think not. They almost bumped into each other by way of that fascinating widow, Mrs Pendarves, who was to become Mrs Patrick Delany, and not, as at first had seemed likely, Mrs John Wesley. She had entered into a pert correspondence with Jonathan Swift about a year before she rather half-heartedly tried to renew her friendship with Wesley. In 1735-6, again, Wesley might have been in touch with Swift whilst negotiating the progress of his father's massive brain-child through the Press, but there is no direct evidence to prove that he actually was, apart from Swift's name in the list of subscribers.

Whilst Wesley's personal knowledge of Dean Swift cannot be proved, his literary indebtedness most certainly can. This fact, however, is obscured from both sides, both by the anonymity of Swift's writings, and by Wesley's plagiarism—not counted such a terrible literary sin in his day! The periodicals to which Swift contributed were read by Wesley, as they were by most educated men of the time, but little stress can be laid on this. It is very doubtful whether many of these contributions would be recognized for Swift's—even 'Stella' herself made mistakes in identification, and that after being supplied with detailed hints and clues by the author.

As far as Swift's verse is concerned, for obvious reasons most of this would not meet with the approval of the essentially refined and delicate mind of John Wesley. But he does at least reprint twenty-two of Swift's more innocuous lines, in praise of patriotism. These appeared in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1785, under the title: 'To the Earl of Oxford; sent him when he was in the Tower before his Trial. By Dean Swift.' Even so, these verses are not Swift's original composition, but a

translation from the much more respectable Horace! It is quite possible, of course, that other quotations from Swift's verse lie scattered about Wesley's *Works*, but Wesley's usual habit of anonymous quotation places endless difficulties in the way of the student.

It is likely that Wesley read several of Swift's pamphlets in their original dress. Some of them would undoubtedly make their appeal to the Methodist reformer of the English Church. We wonder if Wesley ever came across Swift's *A Letter to a young gentleman lately enter'd into Holy Orders*, dated 9th January 1719-20? This stresses several points that were dear to Wesley, such as speaking plainly and audibly, and the cultivation both of reading and of reason. Wesley would have nodded his head in emphatic agreement at Swift's description of a 'fashionable' preacher, delivering a typical sermon, with its

quaint, terse, florid Style, rounded into Periods and Cadencies, commonly without either Propriety or Meaning. I have listen'd with my utmost Attention for half an hour to an Orator of this Species, without being able to understand, much less to carry away, one single Sentence out of a whole Sermon.

The man who could advise his preachers 'scream no more, at the peril of your soul' would surely approve the following:

A plain convincing Reason may possibly operate upon the Mind both of a learned and ignorant Hearer as long as they live, and will edify a thousand times more than the Art of wetting the Handkerchiefs of a whole Congregation.

We know that at least one of Swift's pamphlets was cordially welcomed by Wesley, namely, his *Three Sermons: on Mutual Subjection*, 1 Peter 5.; on *Conscience*, 2 Corinthians 13.; on *the Trinity*, 1 John 5.. Of the third part of this he says:

One of the best tracts which that great man, Dean Swift, ever wrote, was his Sermon upon the Trinity. Herein he shows, that all who endeavour to explain it at all, have utterly lost their way; have, above all other persons, hurt the cause which they intended to promote.

With this attitude toward the doctrine of the Trinity Wesley himself agrees, continuing:

It was in an evil hour that these explainers began their fruitless work. I insist upon no explanation at all; no, not even on the best I ever saw; I mean, that which is given us in the Creed commonly ascribed to Athanasius.

The only reference of John Wesley's to Swift that is at all widely known is that in the immortal *Journal*. In October 1775 Wesley was riding on horseback from Northampton to London, and according to his usual custom was carrying a miscellaneous collection of books in his pack-saddle to dip into as he ambled along. On this occasion he writes:

In my way I looked over a volume of Dr Swift's *Letters*. I was amazed! Was ever such trash palmed upon the world under the name of a great man? More than half of what is contained in those sixteen volumes would be dear to twopenny a volume; being all, and more than all, the dull things which that witty man ever said.

Wesley's disgust here leads him into error. Swift's letters never were, and we believe never will be, published in sixteen volumes. He is obviously getting mixed

up with the collected edition of Swift's *Works*, which he apparently knew. This, in twelve volumes octavo, had been issued by Hawkesworth in 1755; two more volumes were added by Bowyer, in 1762, and two more by Swift's cousin, Deane Swift, in 1765. To these sixteen volumes of *Works* were added in 1766 three volumes of *Letters*, edited by Hawkesworth, and a further three volumes of *Letters* in the following year, edited by Deane Swift. It seems likely that Wesley had picked up one of the three Hawkesworth-edited volumes of letters, which contained the famous *Journal to Stella*. The great Dr Johnson was to bestow the faint praise upon these letters that they had 'some odd attraction and as there is nothing to fatigue attention, if [the reader] is disappointed he can hardly complain'. One can readily understand that the inconsequent small-talk of Swift's gossiping diary would not appeal to the man who told his preachers not to waste time in tittle-tattle, and the baby-talk therein would infuriate him. One can hardly wonder at his judgement if his eye chanced on some such passage as this:

Poor Stella, won't Dingley leave her a little daylight to write to Presto? well, well, we'll have day-light shortly, spite of her teeth: and zoo must cly Lele, and Hele, and Hele aden. Must loo mimitate Pdfir, pay? Iss, and so la shall. And so leles fol ee rettle. Dood mollow.

Nor was there any joy for Wesley in working out in his leisure time such sentences as Swift jots down on 7th March 1710-11:

Yes, I understand you cypher, and Stella guesses right, as she always does. He gave me al bsadnuk lboinpl dfaoir ftoainfbtoy dbionufnad, which I sent him again by Mr Lewis.¹

Wesley's impatience probably kept him from reading the many references in the *Journal to Stella* to a wealthy branch of his own family, Mr and Mrs Garrett Wesley, whose home Swift frequented whilst in London. It was this same Garrett Wesley who offered young Charles Wesley the chance of becoming his heir, and even on his refusal apparently paid his scholastic fees anonymously. A more distant relative, Richard Colley, was eventually nominated as a substitute, on condition that he assumed the name Wesley. His son became the first Lord Mornington, the grandfather of the famous Duke of Wellington. In later years John Wesley was to refer to his brother's youthful decision as 'a fair escape'!

From various incidental references we can show that Wesley did not condemn all Swift's writings as 'trash'. When discussing the Rev. Philip Skelton, whom he calls 'a surprising writer', Wesley shows at least some appreciation of Swift, saying of Skelton:

When there is occasion, he shows all the wit of Dr Swift, joined with ten times his judgement; and with (what is far more) a deep fear of God, and a tender love to mankind.

Strangely enough, Skelton's *Proposals for the Revival of Christianity* were advertised in the *Gentleman's Magazine* as 'by an eminent Hand in Dublin', Swift obviously being intended, though later a correction of this popular belief appeared. Skelton, unlike Swift, was an 'exemplary clergyman', and even a friend to the Methodists in later years. In similar vein Wesley compares with Dean Swift one of his favourite poets, Dr John Byrom, author of 'Christians, awake'!

He has all the wit and humour of Dr Swift, together with much more learning, a deep and strong understanding, and, above all, a serious vein of piety.

¹ The impatient puzzler should skip every other letter.

These rather back-handed compliments to the greatest satirist of his day are redeemed when Wesley comes to speak of Swift's style as divorced from its often sordid subject-matter. Advising a would-be poet, Samuel Furly, he writes:

If you *will* imitate, imitate Mr Addison or Dr Swift, adding in a later letter:

If you imitate any writer, let it be South, Atterbury, or Swift, in whom *all* the properties of a good writer meet.

Later still he sums it all up by claiming that after 'reading the most celebrated writers in the English tongue' for forty-five years he ought to know a good style when he sees one, and goes on to criticize the way in which Furly is raising objections about Swift's style:

Whether *long* periods or *short* are to be chosen is quite another question. Some of those you transcribe from Swift are long; but they are *easy*, too, entirely easy, void of all stiffness, and therefore just such as I advise you to copy after.

It was exactly this plain easiness of Swift's style that annoyed Dr Johnson and made him parry Boswell's defence of Swift's *Conduct of the Allies* with the words:

No, Sir, Swift has told what he had to tell distinctly enough, but that is all. He had to count ten, and he has counted it right.

Johnson himself could not always count ten very clearly, however, as is seen when he came to deliver his ponderous verdict on Swift's style in the *Lives of the Poets*:

His sentences are never too much dilated or contracted; and it will not be easy to find any embarrassment in the complication of his clauses, any inconsequence in his connexions, or abruptness in his transitions. His style was well suited to his thoughts, which are never subtilized by nice disquisitions, decorated by sparkling conceits, elevated by ambitious sentences, or variegated by far-sought learning.

One would like to have Swift's verdict on this Johnsonian masterpiece!

There is little doubt that both John and Charles Wesley had themselves caught something of the satiric sting of Swift's compact style, though the measure of their literary indebtedness through their reading in the Epworth Rectory cannot adequately be assessed. Wesley's remarks on doctors have a Swiftian ring about them:

Calling on a friend, I found him just seized with all the symptoms of a pleurisy. I advised him to apply a brimstone plaster, and in a few hours he was perfectly well. Now to what end should this patient have taken a heap of drugs and lost twenty ounces of blood? To what end? Why to oblige the doctor and apothecary. Enough! Reason good!

Compare his remarks about the lawyer who took up 'thirteen or fourteen sheets of treble-stamped paper' to prove that a man who smuggled £4 of brandy owed £577 to the Government:

In the name of truth, justice, mercy, and common sense, I ask: (1) Why do men lie for lying sake? Is it only to keep their hands in? . . . (2) Where is the justice of swelling four pounds into five hundred and seventy-seven? (3) Where is the common sense of taking up fourteen sheets to tell a story that may be told in ten lines? (4) Where is the mercy of thus grinding the face of the poor? thus sucking the blood of a poor, beggared prisoner?

Would not this be execrable villany if the paper and writing together were only sixpence a sheet, when they have stripped him already of his little all, and not left him fourteen groats in the world?

Wesley's description of an inventive genius might almost have come from Swift's *Laputa*:

He is the greatest genius in little things that ever fell under my notice. . . . He invents all sorts of gadgets, fire-screens, and lamps and inkhorns. . . . I really believe were he seriously to set about it he could invent the best mouse-trap that ever was in the world.

Epigrams worthy of Swift are his sayings about 'a black swan, an honest lawyer!', and 'The Scots dearly love the word of the Lord—on the Lord's day!' Perhaps we see Wesley at his Swiftian best when discussing the subject which called forth some of Swift's most pungent satire, *War*:

Here are forty thousand men gathered together on this plain. What are they going to do? See, there are thirty or forty thousand more at a little distance. And these are going to shoot them through the head or body, or stab them, or split their skulls, and send most of their souls into everlasting fire, as fast as they possibly can. Why so? What harm have they done to them? O none at all! They do not so much as know them. But a man, who is King of France, has a quarrel with another man, who is King of England. So these Frenchmen are to kill as many of these Englishmen as they can, to prove the King of France is in the right.

We find exactly the same kind of thing in Charles Wesley's verse, more especially when he is whipped up into a fury against the Calvinist teaching that God pre-ordained unborn souls to eternal damnation:

*And whom He never once did love
Threatens to love no more;
From them He doth revoke
The grace they did not share,
And blot the names out of His book
That ne'er were written there.*

Examples of these satirical paradoxes abound in the collections of hymns written as a weapon in this theological warfare, *Hymns on God's Everlasting Love*—amongst the earliest of Charles Wesley's compositions, and therefore nearest to any reminiscences of Swift's satire that he may have had. Another example may be quoted:

*The righteous God consign'd
Them over to their doom,
And sent the Saviour of mankind
To damn them from the womb;
To damn for falling short
Of what they could not do,
For not believing the report
Of that which was not true.*

This similarity between the style of Wesley (i.e. John Wesley) and Swift has been remarked by a number of scholars. Sir Leslie Stephen says that Wesley's 'English

is allied to that of Swift or Arbuthnot', whilst Professor Elton claims that Wesley is 'as concise as Swift when he tells a story, or sums up a case, or judges an author'.

C. E. Vulliamy remarks:

In polemical writing he is said to have taken as his pattern the First Epistle of St John; in more discursive essays he was admittedly inspired by Swift.

Dr T. B. Shepherd notes a similar parallel:

Just as Swift's satire almost appals by its quietness, so Wesley seems to grow calmer and more reasonable as he comes to his main arguments.

That John Wesley was familiar with Swift's main works seems fairly obvious from what has already been said. Mr C. L. Ford apparently thought not, however. He claimed, for instance, that Wesley missed the point of an allusion to Swift's *Tale of a Tub* in reading Lord Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead*. This latter once-popular work Wesley read in 1770, though he was not altogether pleased with it, especially with its unjust reflections on the Methodists. The fourth dialogue in the book is between Joseph Addison and Jonathan Swift. When Mercury appears on the heavenly scene he greets Swift effusively (ignoring Addison) thus:

How does my old Lad? How does honest *Lemuel Gulliver*? Have you been in *Lilliput* lately, or the *flying Island*, or with your good nurse *Gumdalchtich*? Pray when did you eat a crust with *Lord Peter*? Is *Jack* as mad still as ever? I hear the poor fellow is almost got well by more genteel Usage. If he had but more *Food* he would be as much in his Senses as *Brother Martin* himself. But *Martin*, they tell me, has spawned a strange brood of fellows called *Methodists*, *Moravians*, *Hutchinsonians*, who are madder than *Jack* was in his worst days. It is a pity you are not alive again to be at them.

We feel quite sure that Wesley did not mistakenly assume that the 'Jack' referred to was himself (as Mr Ford seems to suggest) rather than John Calvin. Like the rest of the Wesley family he had almost certainly read *The Tale of a Tub*, though perhaps like his sister Martha he 'thought it too irreverent to be atoned for by the wit'. We may be sure that the biting religious analogy of 'this wild work', as Johnson called it, which probably cost Swift a bishopric, was not lost on Wesley. He did not deem it desirable, however, to mention the book to the susceptible Methodist public. Lyttelton's summing up of Swift's suggested duties in the after-life would surely appeal to Wesley:

When any Hero comes hither from Earth who wants to be humbled (as most Heroes do), they should set Swift upon him to bring him down. The same good Office he may frequently do to a Saint swoln too much with the Wind of spiritual Pride; or to a Philosopher vain of his Wisdom and Virtue. He will soon shew the first, that he cannot be Holy, without being Humble; and the last, that with all his boasted Morality, he is but a better kind of *Yahoo*. I would also have him apply his anticosmetic Wash to the painted face of female vanity, and his Rod, which draws blood at every stroke, to the hard back of indolent Folly or petulant Wit.

Lyttelton raises an interesting speculation by his regret that Swift was not alive to pillory the 'strange brood of fellows called Methodists'. If he had been, we can be pretty sure that with his hatred of anything savouring of 'enthusiasm' he would have been among the ranks of those who scribbled abuse of Wesley and (more especially) of Whitefield.

So far we have scarcely mentioned Swift's chief claim to immortality, *Travels into several Remote Nations of the World. In Four Parts. By Lemuel Gulliver*. Had Wesley read *Gulliver's Travels*? If so, what did he think of it? From the silence of his writings most scholars have assumed that Wesley did not know the book, though it was bought and discussed as avidly in Oxford as in London circles in 1726, and could hardly have escaped the notice of the studious but still unregenerate don. Certainly it was familiar in the household of Charles Wesley, for he wrote to his wife about the escapades of their children (and the sentence was obviously intended to be read to them):

If Lilliputians will run races with Brobdingnagians, what can they expect but a Fall for their Pride and Ambition?

John Wesley also knew at least something of Captain Gulliver's adventures. In commenting on Captain Jonathan Carver's *Travels*, which he read on a journey in 1790, Wesley says:

Here is no gay account of the Islands of Pelew or Lapita, but a plain relation of matter of fact.

'Lapita' is of course Swift's Laputa, though it is rather unkind of Wesley to link it up with the absolutely authentic Pelew Islands. Obviously, in common with most readers, Part III of *Gulliver's Travels* had impressed him least favourably.

A few years ago the present writer was excited to realize that this by no means ended Wesley's demonstrable acquaintance with Swift's greatest work. He discovered that in his *Doctrine of Original Sin* Wesley had lifted long passages verbatim from *Gulliver's Travels*—without acknowledgement, of course! The thrill of discovery was however modified a few months later on finding that Sir Leslie Stephen also knew of this indebtedness of Wesley to Swift. *The Doctrine of Original Sin* (1757) is Wesley's largest 'original' work, and is judged by some scholars to be his best. Much of the earlier part of it reminds one forcibly of the style of Swift. This makes the transitions from Wesley's own words to the quotations from Swift all the more natural.

The passages quoted from *Gulliver's Travels* are seven in number. In picturing the evil conditions of the day, Wesley has recourse to Gulliver's description of European ways for the benefit of the King of Brobdingnag, speaking of it as 'that humorous but terrible picture, drawn by a late eminent hand'. Wesley interpolates his own sharp comment even after he had started his quotation:

He was perfectly astonished (and who would not be, if it were the first time he had heard it!) at the historical account I gave him of our affairs during the last century; protesting it was only a heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres.

For anyone who is interested in collating Wesley's quotation with the original, two interesting points will emerge. The first is that Wesley in his usual way makes use of his abridging pen. Truly most of the wordy writers of the time needed cutting down a little, but the same cannot normally be said of Swift. However, the passage does not suffer as a result of Wesley's pruning. The second is that, whilst apparently continuing to quote the same speech of Gulliver to the King of Brobdingnag, Wesley actually jumps right over to Glubbudbrib, with a transitional phrase and

a change of tense; here, after quoting two sentences he omits a whole paragraph, and then quotes parts of the opening sentences of the next paragraph. Yet the whole thing reads quite consecutively! To round this section off, Wesley concludes:

We'll might that keen author add: 'If a creature pretending to reason can be guilty of such enormities, certainly the corruption of that faculty is far worse than brutality itself.'

This, though apparently from the same passage, is actually a quotation from Chapter 5 of *A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms*! So Wesley skips lightly over three of Swift's mythical countries, in three separate parts of *Gulliver's Travels*, in order to piece together a paragraph on European history and politics!

Wesley next turns to evils that are to be found at home, instancing in particular the perverting of justice. Here an obvious quotation lies to hand in Swift's diatribe against lawyers in the *Voyage to the Houyhnhnms*, Chapter 5, following shortly after his previous quotation about reason:

There is a society of men among us, bred up from their youth in the art of proving, according as they are paid, by words multiplied for the purpose, that white is black, and black is white.

In spite of its obvious power as satire, the passage which follows about the disputed possession of a cow is cut down to almost exactly one quarter of its original size, and is strangely made more convincing as a result. This section of Wesley's treatise is rounded off by another quotation from the *Voyage to Brobdingnag*, Chapter 6.

There follows a section on war, which Wesley describes as:

a still more horrid reproach to the Christian name, yea, to the name of man, to all reason and humanity. There is war in the world! war between men! war between Christians!

In enlarging upon the causes and conduct of war, Wesley quotes long passages from the *Voyage to the Houyhnhnms*, Chapter 5, neatly dovetailing into them a whole new paragraph from Chapter 12 of the same voyage, and a long paragraph of his own, which was quoted above. One is amazed at the pains and ingenuity that Wesley takes to piece together the different quotations, with a phrase altered here, omitted there, or added elsewhere. Scissors-and-paste work, it is true, but the finished product is something to be proud of!

We believe that *Gulliver's Travels* was read by Wesley during his Oxford days. The Oxford Diaries will probably reveal this. In any case, he would probably follow out his regular student practice with the book, copying out noteworthy passages in a commonplace book—'collecting' it, as this was termed in his day. From such a commonplace book he could more easily fit together disconnected passages into a sequence, as we have seen that he actually did. When the time came to use these extracts he would almost certainly know the name of the author, if he was unaware of it when the book was first read. But he obviously found it wisest to conceal the authorship under the phrase 'a late eminent hand'.

Whilst this was a common practice with Wesley, was there not even greater need for anonymity where Dean Swift was concerned? Was he not a writer of dangerous tendencies, even though there were a few passages in his writings worth passing on to the Methodists? Wesley would not even rebuke the Dean's scatological obsession, for fear of awakening people's morbid interest—though he does go so

far as to quote approvingly in the preface to one of his medical publications the following criticism of Swift:

In all his writings he shows an uncommon affection for the last concoction of the human nutriment.

Wesley was one of those who realized the truth of what a recent critic has said about Swift:

No English writer of corresponding stature has been repudiated so persistently and so fiercely by immediately succeeding generations, but this repudiation had in it a strange kind of excitement which was instantly communicated, so that one did not avoid the fearful object but sought it out in fascinated horror. . . . Through the immoderate hostility of his critics Swift's fame was assured.

John Wesley, whilst he obviously had many scores against Swift, would not enter the ranks of his 'immoderate critics'. Instead, he was ready to use and even recommend (chiefly in private letters, be it noted!) what was good in Swift, without unduly advertising the name of a man to whom the taint of evil certainly clung. As for the evil side of Swift's work, Wesley was content to let it die its natural death in public esteem, as it largely has done.

FRANK BAKER

GEORGE BURNETT (1734-93)

GEORGE BURNETT was one of the 'forty or fifty' Evangelical clergymen who received John Wesley's circular letter written from Scarborough on 19th April 1764.¹ A brief note introduced an appeal for a union of Church of England ministers who agreed on the essentials of Original Sin, Justification by Faith, and Holiness of Heart and Life. George Burnett is not listed amongst the virtuous trio who replied to this plea. Telford supplied no footnote to Burnett's name and Curnock simply identified him as 'G. Burnett, Vicar of Elland'. A more extended account of his life and labours may prove of interest.

George Burnett was born in 1734.² He was a Scotsman, hailing from Aberdeen, where his father, John Burnett, resided as a gentleman.³ George Burnett was brought to Cornwall in 1749⁴ by his fellow countryman and godfather, George Conon. Conon had been Master of Truro Grammar School since 1729,⁵ and was the spiritual parent of Samuel Walker, the Evangelical Curate of Truro. Burnett became an Assistant in the Grammar School, lived with Conon at the school-house and was treated as his son.⁶ In this period he came under the influence of Samuel Walker and felt the call to the Ministry of the Church of England.

Under the supervision of Conon and Walker he began to equip himself for orders. He had become intimate with Thomas Haweis, later well known as a Chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon and a pioneer of the London Missionary Society,⁷ another protégé of Walker who was also preparing for the ministry. The two young candidates, who were the same age, studied together.⁸ They applied themselves to Latin and at the same time sought to attain proficiency as preachers. Walker bitterly regretted that in his early training he had not acquired the art of

extemporaneous speech and determined to exercise his two pupils in this particular from the start. Not only were they put through an intensive course of homiletics, but one afternoon a week they were called upon to preach *ex tempore* before Walker's household.

There was a plan set afoot to send Haweis for a period of tuition under Thomas Adam of Winteringham: whether it was intended that Burnett should accompany him is not clear. This scheme, however, was not carried out, and Burnett and Haweis matriculated together at Christ Church, Oxford, on 1st December 1755.⁹ Walker wrote to William Rawlings on 16th December 1755: 'We have continually letters from T. and G. which give us a good deal of content. They are in a barren land, and will need your prayers. Poor young men, it is well for them that they are together, and especially for your favourite that George is with him. Nothing [can be] more providential, he is so suited [to him]. I know no other so fit for him. They are lovely youths. I have the greatest hopes for them. If they stand their ground, they will be both diligent and useful. They have both their temptations, and both their excellences. Tom will be in danger of over-rashness, and George of over-caution. George will make the greater figure, and Tom will be the most liked. Should they be associates in a cure, nothing would be more desirable. Well, you never forget them. Their well doing is a matter of great importance to the world, for I am either so fond or so foolish as to think they have not many equals.'¹⁰ Walker's prophecy was hardly fulfilled. Haweis made much the greater figure, but was far from being universally popular, as his subsequent sufferings for the Gospel indicate.

Burnett and Haweis remained at Oxford until the spring of 1756 and then returned to Cornwall, where they spent ten months pursuing their studies. They were initiated into the intricacies of Hebrew by Conon and made reasonable progress.¹¹ Walker wrote to Adam under the date 10th May 1756: 'Mr Haweis, the young gentleman I formerly spoke of, and his friend Mr Burnett, are returned to us from Oxford. Their fortunes, nor indeed opportunities of improvement, would not admit of their long continuance there. They purpose studying with me and my friend and father, Mr Conon, the schoolmaster till next spring, by which time, we doubt not they will be well qualified. They are both good scholars, and have a tolerable foundation in Hebrew. I have no doubt of their heart qualifications for the work. In truth, they are lovely and promising young men.'¹²

The matter of securing ordination for these two candidates was to prove problematical, branded as they were from the outset with a name of opprobrium. The diocese of Exeter, in which Truro then stood, was particularly unsuitable for this purpose, as the anti-Methodist prejudices of the Bishop, George Lavington, were only too well known. In the letter quoted above, Walker asked Adam if he could use his influence with Archdeacon Basset¹³ to procure ordination from the Bishop of Lincoln. By 9th March 1757 the matter in the case of Burnett was growing more urgent. In a letter of this date Walker renewed his pressure on Adam. Walker supplied the highest testimonial respecting Burnett: 'For, to say truth, he is all I could wish him, and I doubt not will be eminently diligent in the ministry.' 'I venture to answer for him in every respect; and we shall be glad if he may be near you, since we cannot keep him near us.'¹⁴ By April there was evidently some hope of Adam securing a neighbouring curacy for Burnett, and Walker was encouraged to write: 'I heartily wish you may succeed for George Burnett. Nothing will please