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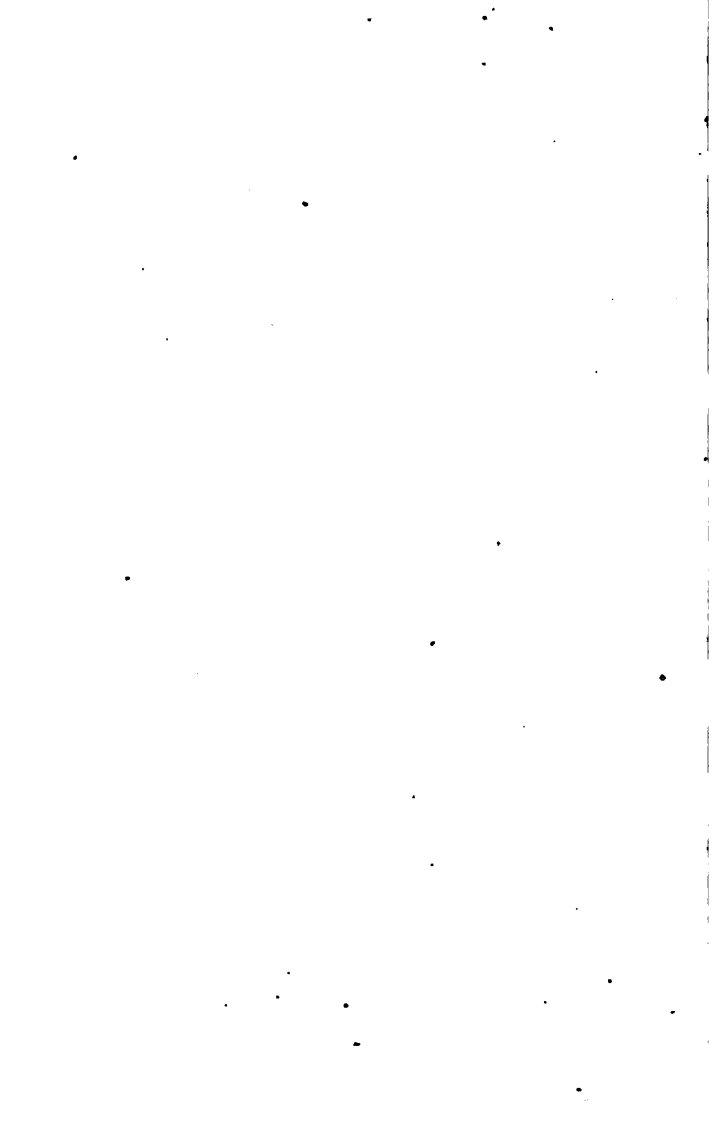
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EDWARD WILSON, M.A.

THE CENTENARY
OF
WESLEYAN METHODISM.

A BRIEF SKETCH

OF
THE RISE, PROGRESS, AND PRESENT STATE OF
THE WESLEYAN-METHODIST SOCIETIES
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

BY THOMAS JACKSON,
PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE.

AN ABRIDGED EDITION.

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P R E F A C E.

THE volume of which this is an abridgment has been written in compliance with the request of the late Wesleyan Conference, expressed in the following Resolution:—"That our President is requested to prepare and publish, with as little delay as possible, a brief but comprehensive work, on the subject of the Centenary; including, with succinct Notices of the origin, progress, and present state of Wesleyan Methodism, and of the leading facts in the life and history of the revered Founder of our societies, such remarks as may assist our friends in the devout improvement of the occasion."

LONDON,
April 9th, 1839.

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THE CENTENARY OF WESLEYAN METHODISM.

CHAPTER I.

STATE OF RELIGION IN ENGLAND BEFORE THE RISE OF METHODISM.

FEW periods of British history are of deeper interest than the early part of the eighteenth century. The army, under the command of the Duke of Marlborough, had gained a series of brilliant victories on the European continent; and at home philosophy and polite learning flourished beyond all former example. The discoveries of Newton filled the civilized world with astonishment; and the compositions of Addison, Steele, Swift, Pope, and others, have secured for that period the name of the Augustan age of English literature. While these eminent men occupied the public attention, other agents were in a course of training, who were destined by Providence to achieve victories greater than Marlborough ever contemplated,—victories over sin and brutal ignorance; and to produce changes in the state of society more profound, momentous, and extensive, than the most polished writers have ever been able to effect. At the very time when patriots and politicians were fired with the military success of the great General

of the age, and gentler spirits were charmed with the smooth numbers of Pope, and the graceful simplicity of Addison, Mrs. Wesley at Epworth, in obscurity, poverty, and sorrow, by her prayers, example, and assiduous instructions, was forming the character of her sons, two of whom were among the principal instruments of reviving Christianity in its primitive spirituality and power.

The Centenary of this great revival of religion, to which the name of Methodism has been given, is intended to be celebrated in the year 1839 by the Wesleyan body, as a subject of grateful acknowledgment to the God of all grace; and the design of the present publication is, to trace the leading facts connected with the rise and progress of this work, which is conceived to present striking proofs of divine interference.

That some extraordinary means were then necessary to bring the truths of Christianity more effectually to bear upon the spirit and conduct of the people of England, is generally acknowledged. On this subject, indeed, the evidence is fearfully strong and conclusive. It was unquestionably the most unevangelical period that had ever occurred in this country since the Reformation was completed in the reign of Elizabeth. Infidelity was extensively prevalent, both in the form of downright blasphemy, and of philosophical speculation. 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.

Strenuous efforts were also then made by several ecclesiastics to introduce deadly heresy into the church of God. The learned Dr. Samuel Clarke, occupying the influential post of Rector of St. James's, and enjoying the friendship of Sir Isaac Newton, and the patronage of the Queen, openly appeared as the advocate of Arianism; and was assisted by the erudite and indefatigable Whiston, with other writers of less note. In the west of England, Hallet and Peirce, two eminent Ministers among the Dissenters, espoused the same cause, in which they were supported by some of their brethren in London. Waterland came forward as the successful opponent of Clarke; and several Dissenting Ministers laboured with honourable zeal and talent to preserve their churches in the catholic faith: yet the circumstance that Clergymen of superior learning and ability were themselves disputing about the very substance of Christianity, must have had a very injurious influence upon the minds of the common people, and still more upon speculative libertines, in an age of profanity and scepticism.

The interests of religion must at all times depend, in a great measure, upon the character and ministrations of the Clergy. When these important functionaries live in the spirit of their holy vocation, preach the truth with fidelity and affec-

tion, and pay due attention to their pastoral charge, their labours cannot be altogether unsuccessful; for they are sanctioned by the promised blessing of God, which will never be withheld. In the times of which we are speaking, there was, on the part of the great body of the Episcopal Clergy, an evident departure from some of the most important theological principles of the Reformation. Not a few were notoriously ignorant of the science which they were appointed to teach, and therefore utterly incompetent to grapple with the errors and wickedness of the times. They were deficient also in that weight of moral character which is always necessary to ministerial success. Many were despised for their inefficiency, while they were hated for the sake of their office.

The Dissenting Ministers, in general, professed to hold the peculiar tenets of Calvinism; but not a few of them, at the period in question, ran into the opposite extreme, and preached a gospel—if gospel it may be called—in which the great truths of the Christian revelation had little or no place. They seem to have thought that Christianity was to be checked and modified by what they, in common with the Deists, called “the light of nature;” and as that “light” discovered to them nothing concerning a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, Adam’s federal relation to his posterity, original sin, the atonement of Christ, justification by faith, and the offices of the Holy Spirit, these teachers maintained a corresponding silence on all subjects of this nature. In many volumes of sermons by Dissenting Ministers, which were published during this period, however we may admire the learning, ingenuity, and eloquence of the writers, we look in vain for any such answer to the question,

“What must I do to be saved?” as is at all consistent with St. Paul’s epistles, or can satisfy the conscience of a man who is convinced of his guilt, and of the sinfulness of his own nature. Among the Dissenters there was a great decay of spiritual religion, arising perhaps partly from the very high Calvinism which some of them maintained, but chiefly from the unevangelical ministry which had been introduced among them.

These facts are stated, not for any party or sinister purpose, but to show that the nation was on the brink of ruin, both with regard to religion and public morals; and that unless God in his merciful providence had raised up some extraordinary means of counteracting the evils which were then in full operation, the consequences must have been most disastrous. The age was not so remarkable for any one particular vice or crime, as for a general abandonment to ungodliness, and to profligacy of manners. Such was the coarseness of the public taste, that some of the most polished writings of the times contain passages which no respectable person could now read aloud in a mixed company. Pope and Prior knew the character of their readers when they thus offended against the decencies of life. But the fact is, men of rank and fashion laughed at religion, and the common people wallowed in sin.

To prove that the statements which have been just given are not only substantially correct, but correct in every part, we adduce the following testimonies. It will be observed that they are not selected from modern writers, but are given by unexceptionable witnesses, who lived in the times which they describe.

BISHOP BURNET, 1713.

“ I AM now in the seventieth year of my age ; and as I cannot speak long in the world in any sort, so I cannot hope for a more solemn occasion than this, of speaking with all due freedom, both to the present and to the succeeding ages. Therefore, I lay hold on it, to give a free vent to those sad thoughts that lie on my mind both day and night, and are the subject of many secret mournings. I dare appeal to that God to whom the secrets of my heart are known, and to whom I am shortly to give an account of my ministry, that I have the true interests of this Church ever before my eyes, and that I pursue them with a sincere and fervent zeal. If I am mistaken in the methods I follow, God, to whom the integrity of my heart is known, will not lay that to my charge. 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.* I will, in examining this, confine myself to.....the Clergy.

“ Our Ember-weeks are the burden and grief of my life. The much greater part of those who come to be ordained are ignorant to a degree not to be apprehended by those who are not obliged to know it. The easiest part of knowledge is that to which they are the greatest strangers ; I mean, the plainest part of the Scriptures, which they say, in excuse for their ignorance, that their Tutors in the Universities never mention the reading of to them ; so that they can give no account, or, at least, a very imperfect

one, of the contents even of the Gospels. Those who have read some few books, yet never seem to have read the Scriptures. Many cannot give a tolerable account even of the Catechism itself, how short and plain soever. They cry, and think it a sad disgrace to be denied orders; though the ignorance of some is such, that, in a well-regulated state of things, they would appear not knowing enough to be admitted to the holy sacrament.

“This does often tear my heart. The case is not much better in many who, having got into orders, come for institution, and cannot make it appear that they have read the Scriptures, or any one good book, since they were ordained; so that the small measure of knowledge upon which they got into holy orders not being improved, is in a way to be quite lost: and then they think it a great hardship, if they are told they must know the Scriptures and the body of divinity better before they can be trusted with the care of souls. These things pierce one’s soul, and make him often cry out, ‘O that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away, and be at rest.’ What are we like to grow to? In what a case are we, to deal with any adversary, Atheist, Papist, or Dissenters; or in any sort to promote the honour of God, and carry on the great concerns of the Gospel; when so gross an ignorance in the fundamentals of religion has spread itself so much among those who ought to teach others, and yet need that one teach them the first principles of the oracles of God?”*

* Pastoral Care, Preface to the Third Edition, 1713.

BISHOP GIBSON, 1728.

“THEY who live in these great cities, (London and Westminster,) or have had frequent recourse to them, and have any concern for religion, must have observed, to their great grief, *that profaneness and impiety are grown bold and open*; that a new sort of vice, of a very horrible nature, and almost unknown before in these parts of the world, was springing up and gaining ground among us, if it had not been checked by the seasonable care of the civil administration; that, in some late writings, public stews have been openly vindicated, and public vices recommended to the protection of the Government, as public benefits; and that great pains have been taken to make men easy in their vices, and deliver them from the restraints of conscience, by undermining all religion, and promoting atheism and infidelity; and, what adds to the danger, by doing it under specious colours and pretences of several kinds.” *

BISHOP BUTLER, 1736.

“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.*” †

* Pastoral Letters, p. 2, Second Edition.

† Advertisement prefixed to the Analogy, first published in 1736.

ARCHBISHOP SECKER, 1738.

“MEN have always complained of their own times, and always with too much reason. But though it is natural to think those evils the greatest which we feel ourselves; and therefore mistakes are easily made in comparing one age with another: yet in this we cannot be mistaken, *that an open and professed disregard to religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the present age; that this evil is grown to a great height in the metropolis of the nation; is daily spreading through every part of it; and, bad in itself as any can be, must of necessity bring in all others after it. Indeed, it hath already brought in such dissoluteness and contempt of principle, in the higher part of the world, and such profligate intemperance, and fearlessness of committing crimes, in the lower, as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal. And God knows, far from stopping, it receives, through the ill designs of some persons, and the inconsiderateness of others, a continual increase. Christianity is now ridiculed and railed at, with very little reserve; and the teachers of it, without any at all. Indeed, with respect to us, (the Clergy,) the rule which most of our adversaries appear to have set themselves, is, to be, at all adventures, as bitter as they can: and they follow it, not only beyond truth, but beyond probability.....Still, were these invectives only to affect us personally, dear as our reputations are and ought to be to us, the mischief would be small in comparison of what it is. But the consequence hath been, as it naturally must, that disregard to us hath greatly increased the dis-*

*regard to public worship and instruction ; that many are grown prejudiced against religion ; nay, more, indifferent about it, and unacquainted with it. And the emissaries of the Romish Church, taking the members of ours at this unhappy disadvantage, have begun to reap great harvests in the field, which hath been thus prepared for them by the labours of those who would be thought their most irreconcilable enemies.” **

“The necessity of a moral life most men will own in general terms ; only what they are pleased to call so is often a very immoral one, both with respect to their fellow-creatures, and the government of themselves. *But regard to piety is strangely lost, even amongst persons that are otherwise tolerably serious. Many have laid aside all appearances of it ; and others who would seem to keep them up, do it with evident marks of indifference and contempt.” †*

To the sad testimonies given by these eminent Prelates may be added the following, selected from the writings of devout and orthodox Dissenters.

DR. JOHN GUYSE, 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 godli-

* Eight Charges, p. 4. Edit. 1790. † Ibid. p. 21.

ness, into our solemn assemblies, into our dealings with God, into our dependencies on him, expectations from him, and devotedness to him. . . .

“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 Christian, be affected at these thoughts!”*

THE REV. JOHN HURRION, 1729.

“THE malignant opposition made to him (the Holy Spirit) by some, and the vile contempt cast upon him by others, are things which have quenched and grieved him, and *caused him to depart to that degree, as hereby almost all vital religion is lost out of the world.* Hence it is that *the glory of God in Christ, the faith, joy, and zeal of Christians, are under such a cloud at this day.* Is it not then high time to speak?” †

* Twelve Sermons delivered at Coward's Lecture, p. 261. Edit. 1729.

† Sermons on the Holy Spirit, p. 21. Edit. 1734.

DR. ISAAC WATTS, 1731.

“AMONG the papers published last year, there hath been some inquiry made, whether there be any decay of the ‘Dissenting interest;’ and what may be supposed to have been the occasion of it. So far as I have searched into that matter, I have been informed, that whatsoever decrease may have appeared in some places, there have been sensible advances in others. And without entering into any debate about the particular reasons of its declension in any town whatsoever, I am well satisfied that the great and general reason is, *the decay of vital religion in the hearts and lives of men; and the little success which the ministrations of the Gospel have had of late for the conversion of sinners to holiness, and the recovery of them from the state of corrupt nature, and the course of this world, to the life of God by Jesus Christ.*

“Nor is the complaint of *the declension of virtue and piety* made only by the Protestant Dissenters. It is a *general matter of mournful observation amongst all that lay the cause of God to heart; and therefore it cannot be thought amiss for every one to use all just and proper efforts for the recovery of dying religion in the world.*” *

THE REV. ABRAHAM TAYLOR, 1734.

“WHEN any man of a thoughtful, serious temper considers *the great decay of practical religion in this nation*, and, at the same time, calls to mind the contempt which has been for many years cast on the

* Preface to *An Humble Attempt towards the Revival of Practical Religion*. Edit. 1735.

Holy Spirit and his operations, he must readily conclude that this is *the grand cause of the corruptions and abominations which abound among us.* The Spirit has been grieved and offended, and *he, in a great measure, is withdrawn and gone.* It is, therefore, no wonder that *the religion of the closet and the family is so much neglected, and that public ordinances are of so little benefit to such as, in a formal way, engage in them.*

“His motions as a quickener, a convincer, an instructor, and a comforter, are frequently bantered by such as would not be thought to throw off all regard to the Christian institution. His sealing up believers to the day of redemption, or his witnessing with their spirits that they are the children of God, is treated with grimace by some who pretend the Bible is their religion. All that profess to depend on his aid and conduct are ridiculed as enthusiasts by such as do not in words deny the authority of Scripture. It must with sorrow be said,—for, though it is a sad truth, it is a real fact,—that it has been too common for the Holy Spirit to be left out in preaching upon duty; and it has been too general a thing to neglect putting such as are pressed to regard their salvation, on keeping up in their minds a continual sense of their being able to do nothing aright without his aid and assistance.” *

Testimonies of a similar kind might be multiplied to an almost unlimited extent; but these may at present suffice. They furnish melancholy proof of the fearful prevalence of infidelity, and of proflig-

* Preface to Hurrion's Sermons on the Holy Spirit, p. 5. Edit. 1734.

gacy of manners, among the irreligious part of the community; of the spread and withering influence of antichristian error among professing Christians; while the existing ministry, in the length and breadth of the land, with some honourable exceptions, was comparatively powerless. Churchmen carried on, from year to year, the Boyle Lecture, in opposition to infidelity and scepticism; and the Lady Moyer Lecture, in defence of Christian orthodoxy. The Dissenters also established their Lectures at Salters' Hall, Berry-street, and Lime-street, against Popery, and other forms of heterodox opinion which were rapidly gaining ground among them: and many of the Lecturers discharged their duty with very superior zeal and ability. Yet, amidst all this effort, accompanied by the regrets of good men on account of the declension of spiritual and practical religion, it is undeniable that "iniquity abounded, and the love of many waxed cold." The enemy triumphed, and Israel was fainthearted. The alleged irregularities of Methodism have often been a subject of loud complaint; so that when Mr. Wesley, accompanied by his fellow-helpers to the truth, appeared in the field of conflict, many an Eliab, both in the ranks of Churchmanship and Dissent, said to him, in angry tone, "Why camest thou down hither? . . . I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart." The appeal is now made to those who love Christ and his religion better than the interests of party, whether the answer of the stripling of Bethlehem is not justly applicable in this case: "And David said, What have I now done? *Is there not a cause?*"

Mr. Wesley was not the only man who thought that, at the period in question, the English nation

had nearly filled up the measure of its iniquities. The very pious and intelligent Dr. Woodward expressed the same apprehension when preaching at the Boyle Lecture. "Whenever things are come to such extremity," says he, "that the laws of God are trampled on with insolence and boasting, and the mysteries of our holy religion are made the scorn and laughter of profane men;—if blasphemy and obscenity come into credit, and religion and virtue are pointed at as ridiculous;—if it be thought a vain and mean thing to fear God, and to make serious mention of his name;—if it even become unfashionable to praise our infinite Benefactor at our tables, and to appear serious and devout in our churches;—if the holy and tremendous name of the great and glorious God be not only vainly used, but vilely treated; his sacred day levelled in common with the rest; and his holy sacraments rejected by some and slighted by others;—if these crying enormities are public and common, and there be no power or authority in Church or State put forth to stem or control them;—such a nation or people will, without a miracle, first become a horrible scene of atheism and impiety, and then of misery and desolation." *

* Collection of Sermons preached at the Lecture founded by the Hon. Robert Boyle, vol. ii. p. 546. Folio Edit. 1739.

CHAPTER II.

THE EARLY LIFE AND THE CONVERSION OF THE
TWO WESLEYS.

THAT form of Christianity to which the name of Wesleyan Methodism has been given, arose, without any previous plan, out of the united labours of the brothers, the Rev. JOHN and CHARLES WESLEY. These eminent men were born at Epworth, in Lincolnshire, where their father, the Rev. Samuel Wesley, was the Rector. He was a man of superior learning, and of stern integrity; and having in early life left the Dissenters, and connected himself with the established Church, his attachment to her interests and order was very strong. Their mother, Mrs. Susanna Wesley, was a woman of extraordinary sense, and of sincere piety. She was a daughter of Dr. Samuel Annesley, a truly devout Nonconformist Minister; and, like her husband, when young she quitted the ranks of Dissent, and became a worshipper in the national Establishment. In her subsequent life she expressed a decided aversion from what she called "the Presbyterian faith;" and as the early training of her children devolved chiefly upon herself, she was careful, as might have been expected, to imbue their minds with the same views and feelings. In this work she was successful; and her two sons, when they entered upon their public career, were among the strictest of strict Churchmen, and deemed it scarcely possible that salvation should be attained, at least in this country, in any religious community but their own.

Mr. John Wesley, the elder of the two brothers,

was born June 14th, 1703. When about six years and a half old, he had an almost miraculous escape from death. One night it was discovered that the parsonage house was on fire; and when the rest of the family had fled for their lives from the flaming mansion, they were distressed to find that he was missing, being asleep in one of the chambers, to which all access by the stairs was now cut off. In this terrible emergency he awoke, and fled to the window, from which he was taken by one of the neighbours, who stood upon the shoulders of another. Just then the roof fell in; so that had his deliverance been delayed only for a few moments, he must have perished in the flames. Thus did a merciful Providence watch over the future heir of salvation, and spare him as the instrument of good to mankind. The grateful father, witnessing this singular interposition of the divine compassion, and finding himself surrounded by his wife and children, called upon all present to kneel down, and unite with him in grateful thanksgiving to God. "Let the house go," said he, "I am rich enough." *

The child thus signally preserved became remarkable, under the training of his excellent mother, for the seriousness of his spirit, and the general propriety of his behaviour; so that at the age of eight years he was admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's supper. When he was eleven years old, he was sent to the Charterhouse School in London, where he was soon distinguished by his diligence and progress in learning. At seventeen, he was elected to Christ Church, Oxford, where he pursued his studies to great advantage; and at the age of twenty-one, it is said that he appeared the very sensible and acute

* Arminian Magazine, vol. i. pp. 32, 33.

Collegian, possessed of a fine classical taste, and of the most liberal and manly sentiments. He was afterwards elected a Fellow of Lincoln College; and was also appointed Greek lecturer, and moderator of the classes.

Mr. Charles Wesley was born December 18th, 1708. Like the rest of the children, he received the first rudiments of learning from his inestimable mother; and in the year 1716, being about eight years of age, he was sent to Westminster School, and placed under the care of his eldest brother Samuel, then an usher in that famous establishment. By Samuel he was confirmed in those high-church principles, the impression of which he had doubtless received under the paternal roof. He was sprightly and active; apt to learn; but arch and unlucky, though not ill-natured. From Westminster he removed to Oxford, where he entered at Christ Church, and afterwards became a Student of that College,—a title which embraces what in other Colleges is usually called a Fellowship. According to his own account, he wasted the first year of his residence at the University in diversions; but he afterwards applied himself diligently to his studies, and graduated in the usual course. He attained to eminence in classical scholarship, his own poetic mind enabling him justly to appreciate the beauties of the great writers of antiquity.

It was during their residence at Oxford that the two Wesleys became deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of religion. They saw it to be the great business of life, to which every other occupation and pursuit should be subordinated; and they perceived, more clearly than ever, that it consists, not in the performance of outward duties, but in a right

state of the heart. John was the first that received these impressions, which were mainly produced by the reading of three books which successively fell in his way. The first was Bishop Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying;" from which he learned that a simple intention to please God is necessary in every action. The second was Kempis's "Christian's Pattern;" which strengthened his conviction of the spirituality of true religion. The third was Mr. Law's "Serious Call to a devout and holy Life;" in the principles of which he was further confirmed by the same writer's treatise on "Christian Perfection." All these works are well adapted to convince the man of the world that his pleasures are both vain and sinful; and to make the formalist feel that his empty religion is not Christianity; but while they forcibly inculcate purity of heart as the essence of Christian godliness, not one of them shows the manner in which that blessing is to be obtained. They preserve a complete silence respecting the faith by which the conscience is purged from dead works, and the very thoughts of the heart are made pure; and therefore leave the reader engaged in the hopeless attempt to practise Christian holiness while he is under the power of sin. He is required to love God with all his heart; but he receives no information concerning the manner in which he is to be saved from the condemnation to which he is liable on account of his past transgressions, and from "the carnal mind which is enmity against God." The imperfect instruction which the Wesleys thus received, at this period of their lives, left them unacquainted with the method in which the "ungodly are justified;" and hence they were for many years unsuccessful in their efforts to attain that spirituality of mind which they saw to be both their duty and privilege.

They served God from a principle of servile fear, rather than of constraining love. Theirs was not a filial spirit, but a spirit of bondage. They could not "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks;" for they had not as yet "received the atonement:" nor did they see how the sacrificial blood of Christ, and the offices of the Holy Ghost, were to be made available in order to their present salvation from guilt, and from the evils of their fallen nature.

Mr. John Wesley received the deep religious convictions, to which reference has just been made, some years before his brother; concerning whom he says, "He pursued his studies diligently, and led a regular, harmless life; but if I spoke to him about religion, he would warmly answer, 'What, would you have me to be a saint all at once?' and would hear no more." Such was the state of Charles's mind when John, having been ordained Deacon by Bishop Potter, September 19th, 1725, and Priest the year following, left Oxford in August, 1727, for the purpose of being his father's Curate at Epworth and Wroote. John returned to Oxford in November, 1729, intending to take up his permanent residence there as a Tutor; and was rejoiced to find that, during his absence, and chiefly by means of his influence, his brother had become deeply serious, having for some months received the Lord's supper weekly, and prevailed upon two or three young men to do the same. These gentlemen had occasionally met together, to assist and encourage each other in their several duties. The exact regularity of their lives, as well as studies, occasioned a young gentleman of Christ Church to say, "Here is a new set of Methodists sprung up;" alluding, it is said, to some ancient

Physicians who were so called. The name was new and quaint ; so it took immediately ; and the Methodists were known all over the University. On Mr. John Wesley's arrival, he became one of their fraternity ; and the direction of their concerns was gladly committed to his superior judgment.

Of this first Methodist society Mr. Wesley gives the following account :—“ 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.” *

This was the first Methodist society. It consisted exclusively of young men, whose theological views were imperfect, and whose experience was limited ; yet they had a sincere desire to please God ; and in diligence, self-denial, and active benevolence, they far surpassed many who have boasted of the superiority of their religious knowledge, and have despised these simple-hearted worshippers of God, and inquirers after truth. They instructed the children of the neglected poor ; they visited the sick, and the prisoners in the common jail, for whom no other men seemed

* Works, vol. viii. p. 348.

to care ; they gave attendance to secret prayer, public worship, and the Lord's table with scrupulous exactness ; they observed the regular fasts of the Church ; they assisted each other in their studies, and watched over each other's spiritual interests with kindness and fidelity ; and they conscientiously saved all the money that they could for pious and charitable purposes. Some grave men thought them "righteous overmuch," and attempted to dissuade them from an excess of piety ; while profane wits treated them with sarcasm and contempt : but these young disciples of the cross showed the strength and sincerity of their convictions by patient perseverance in their plans of usefulness and devotion. They consulted the elder Mr. Wesley, at Epworth, who urged them forward in the course upon which they had entered.

An incident which Mr. Wesley has related in one of his sermons will serve to show the tenderness of his conscience, and the serious light in which he viewed his responsibility, during this part of his college life. "When I was at Oxford," says he, "in a cold winter's day, a young maid (one of those we kept at school) called upon me. I said, 'You seem half-starved. Have you nothing to cover you but this thin linen gown?' She said, 'Sir, this is all I have.' I put my hand in my pocket ; but found I had scarce any money left, having paid away what I had. It immediately struck me, 'Will thy Master say, *Well done, good and faithful steward?* Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold ! O justice ! O mercy ! Are not these pictures the blood of this poor maid ? See thy expensive apparel in the same light ; thy gown, hat, head-dress ! Every thing about thee which cost more than Christian duty

required thee to lay out is the blood of the poor! O be wise for the time to come! Be more merciful! more faithful to God and man! more abundantly adorned with good works! *'”

In another of his sermons, Mr. Wesley has given a very instructive view of the state of his heart at this period of his life, and of his ineffectual attempts to acquire the true Christian faith and love. “After carefully heaping up the strongest arguments I could find,” says he, “either in ancient or modern authors, for the very being of a God, and (which is nearly connected with it) the existence of an invisible world, I have wandered up and down, musing with myself: ‘What, if all these things which are around me, this earth and heaven, this universal frame, has existed from eternity? What, if that melancholy supposition of the old poet be the real case? What, if ‘the generations of men be exactly parallel with the generation of leaves;’ if the earth drops its successive inhabitants just as the tree drops its leaves? What, if that saying of a great man be really true?—

‘Death is nothing, and nothing is after death.’

How am I sure that this is not the case; that I ‘have not followed cunningly-devised fables?’—And I have pursued the thought till there was no spirit in me, and I was ready to ‘choose strangling rather than life.’” †

With respect to the principle of divine love, he also inquires, “What can cold reason do in this matter? It may present us with fair ideas; it can draw a fine picture of love: but this is only a painted fire. And farther than this reason cannot go. I made the trial for many years. I collected the finest hymns,

* Wesley's Works, vol. vii. p. 21. † Ibid. vol. vi. p. 356.

prayers, and meditations, which I could find in any language; and I said, sung, or read them over and over, with all possible seriousness and attention. But still I was like the bones in Ezekiel's vision: 'The skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them.'*"

The society in Oxford had not been long under the guidance of Mr. John Wesley before it was called to mourn the loss of Mr. Morgan, who died at the commencement of his religious course. He was the son of an Irish gentleman, and evidently a person of fine temper and habits. Mr. Wesley addressed a letter to Mr. Morgan's father, stating several particulars respecting his deceased friend, and expressing the profoundest respect for his memory; and Mr. Samuel Wesley, the younger, wrote a poem on the occasion of his death. Mr. Morgan led his brethren into one department of useful and self-denying labour, by visiting a murderer under sentence of death.

Mr. Wesley's father died in April, 1735, and the living of Epworth was given away in May following; so that he now considered himself to be permanently fixed in the quiet retreat of Oxford, without future molestation; and there he hoped to render important service to the Church by promoting the spirit of piety among the men who were designed for the Christian ministry. Yet his hopes in this respect were overruled. 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 appoint-

* Works, vol. vi. p. 359.

ment 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. They embarked at Gravesend on Tuesday, Oct. 21st, accompanied by Mr. Oglethorpe the Governor, 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." *

Before Mr. Wesley left England he published a single sermon, which he probably intended as a sort of parting memorial, to be distributed among his friends. It displays very deep seriousness of temper, and a solemn conviction of the necessity of holiness; but, at the same time, it proves that his views of Christian truth were as yet very inadequate. He describes the world as a vast hospital; and the afflictions of life as designed to cure the moral maladies of mankind. Yet he states that, to whatever extent the healing process may be carried in this life, it is only in death that the best of men will be saved from all sin, which is conceived to dwell particularly in the earthly frame. The cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ, and the quickening and purifying energy of the Holy Spirit, upon which the sacred writers lay so much stress, he almost entirely overlooks.† With the most upright intentions, but with these imperfect

* Works, vol. i. p. 17.

† This sermon which is entitled, "the Trouble and Rest of Good Men," may be found in his Works, vol. vii. pp. 365—372.

views of their calling, the brothers sailed for Georgia, in the character of Christian Missionaries. They had more thoroughly digested the powerful and elegant, but unevangelical, writings of Mr. Law, than either the Epistles of St. Paul, or the Homilies of their own Church.

One of the objects contemplated in the formation of the new colony was, to provide an asylum for Protestants who were persecuted on the European continent; and hence Mr. Wesley and his brethren found in the ship with them several members of the Moravian Church, from Germany, with Mr. Nitschman, one of their Bishops. In these strangers the English Methodists beheld Christianity in a light more gentle, attractive, and consoling, than any in which they had ever before seen it. These devout exiles bore every inconvenience, and even insult, with the utmost meekness; they were always ready to render the humblest service to their fellow-voyagers; and in storms and hurricanes, while others were ready to die with fear, they calmly sang the praises of God, expressing a cheerful confidence and resignation in the prospect of being immediately swallowed up in the great deep. With the temper of these people the Wesleys were, at this time, experimentally unacquainted. Neither of them was delivered from the fear of death; and they had no just conception of the holy cheerfulness which is produced by an application of the blood of Christ to the conscience, and the abiding witness and operation of the heavenly Comforter. Theirs was a religion of fear and mortification, rather than of holy peace and joy.

On their arrival in Georgia, the brothers were separated; John taking up his residence at Savannah, and Charles, at Frederica, with the Governor,

to whom he sustained the office of Secretary. They both applied themselves to their clerical duties with a diligence and fidelity of which the world has seen few examples. "As soon as I set foot in Georgia," says John, "I began preaching at five in the morning; and every communicant, that is, every serious person in the town, constantly attended throughout the year: I mean, came every morning, winter and summer, unless in the case of sickness. They did so till I left the province."* In addition to this, he visited the people daily from house to house; and he catechized the children in the school every Saturday afternoon. The following is his own account of his labours on the Sabbath in the latter part of his residence at Savannah:—"The first English prayers lasted from five till half an hour past six. The Italian, which I read to a few Vaudois, began at nine. The second service for the English, including the sermon and the holy communion, continued from half an hour past ten, till about half an hour past twelve. The French service began at one. At two I catechized the children. About three I began the English service. After this was ended, I had the happiness of joining with as many as my largest room would hold, in reading, prayer, and singing praise. And about six the service of the Moravians, so called, began: at which I was glad to be present, not as a teacher, but as a learner."†

These extraordinary labours, and the principles from which they proceeded, were ill appreciated by the great body of the colonists, who hated this incessant application to religious duties, and especially the strict ecclesiastical discipline which the brothers endeavoured to establish. Charles, at Frederica,

* Works, vol. iv. p. 269.

† *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 60.

was the innocent victim of a foul conspiracy, by means of which the Governor was for a time deceived, and induced to treat his upright Clerical Secretary with a harshness and severity which had nearly proved fatal to his life. The wicked plot was afterwards unravelled; and the Governor, with expressions of the deepest regret for the course which he had pursued, gave to this persecuted man a ring, accompanied with the strongest declarations of his confidence and affection, and a request that it might be preserved as a perpetual token of his love. At the beginning of August, Charles left Georgia, being entrusted with despatches to the Trustees in England; and the Governor himself left in November following.

The situation of John now became increasingly painful. The Trustees had appointed him Minister of Savannah; but to this appointment he had never consented. He had engaged to go to Georgia only for the purpose of instructing the Indians; and because of the unsettled state of the colony, there appeared no probability that he could fulfil this the only object of his mission. He therefore began to entertain serious thoughts of following his brother to England. In the meanwhile a prosecution against him was commenced, for having repelled a lady from the holy communion, the particulars of which he has given in his printed Journal. He attended the Court six or seven times, to answer for himself; but finding that his persecutors determined to defer the trial, and harass him by delay, he gave public notice of his intended departure, and openly embarked for England in the beginning of December, 1737; having served the colony as a Minister one year and nearly nine months.

Mr. Wesley's mission to Georgia was of the utmost importance to himself, though he failed in the particular object which he had in view. His intercourse with the Moravian Brethren served greatly to discover to him the true nature of Christianity. He admired their spirit during his voyage to Georgia ; and on his arrival there, he was introduced to Mr. Spangenberg, one of their Pastors, whose advice he asked relative to his own conduct. The venerable German said, " My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" Mr. Wesley says, " I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, ' Do you know Jesus Christ?' I paused, and said, ' I know he is the Saviour of the world.' ' True,' replied he, ' but do you know he has saved you?' I answered, ' I hope he has died to save me.' He only added, ' Do you know yourself?' I said, ' I do;' but I fear they were vain words." *

He afterwards took up a temporary residence in the house of these devout people ; and as they all lived in one room, he was with them from morning to night. He says, " They were always employed, always cheerful themselves, and in good humour with one another. They had put away all anger, and strife, and wrath, and bitterness, and clamour, and evil-speaking. They walked worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called, and adorned the Gospel of our Lord in all things."

One day while he remained with them, he says, " They met to consult concerning the affairs of their Church ; Mr. Spangenberg being shortly to go to Pennsylvania, and Bishop Nitschman to return to

* Works, vol. i. p. 23.

Germany. After several hours spent in conference and prayer, they proceeded to the election and ordination of a Bishop. The great simplicity, as well as solemnity, of the whole almost made me forget the seventeen hundred years between, and imagine myself in one of those assemblies where form and state were not; but Paul the tent-maker, or Peter the fisherman, presided; yet with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.* It is probable that these were the very first impressions which he received of the existence of scriptural Christianity beyond the pale of his own Church. These impressions at length ripened into a truly catholic spirit, of which he lived and died an eminent example.

During the voyage home his attention was especially directed to the state of his own heart; and, after strict self-examination, he expressed himself in the following manner:—"I went to America to convert the Indians; but O! who shall convert me? who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near. But let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain!'

'I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore.'

"I think, verily, if the Gospel be true, I am safe: for I not only have given, and do give, all my goods to feed the poor; I not only give my body to be burned, drowned, or whatever God shall appoint for me; but I follow after charity, (though not as I ought, yet as I can,) if haply I may attain it. I

* Works, vol. i. p. 26.

now believe the Gospel is true. I show my faith by my works, by staking my all upon it. I would do so again and again a thousand times, if the choice were still to make. Whoever sees me sees I would be a Christian. Therefore are my ways not like other men's ways. Therefore I have been, I am, I am content to be, a by-word, a proverb of reproach. But in a storm I think, 'What, if the Gospel be not true? Then thou art of all men most foolish. For what hast thou given thy goods, thy ease, thy friends, thy reputation, thy country; thy life? For what art thou wandering over the face of the earth? —a dream, a cunningly-devised fable! O who will deliver me from this fear of death? What shall I do? Where shall I fly from it? Should I fight against it by thinking, or by not thinking of it?'" *

Mr. Charles Wesley landed in England, December 3d, 1737; and his brother on the 1st of February, 1738. On again examining the state of his heart, and reviewing his past conduct, Mr. John Wesley was deeply convinced that he fell short of the true Christian character. "It is now," said he, "two years and almost four months since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity: but what have I learned myself in the mean time? Why, (what I least of all suspected,) that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God. 'I am not mad,' though I thus speak; but 'I speak the words of truth and soberness;' if haply some of those who still dream may awake, and see, that as I am, so are they.

"Are they read in philosophy? So was I. In

* Works, vol. i. pp. 74, 75.

ancient or modern tongues? So was I also. Are they versed in the science of divinity? I too have studied it many years. Can they talk fluently upon spiritual things? The very same could I do. Are they plenteous in alms? Behold, I gave all my goods to feed the poor. Do they give of their labour, as well as of their substance? I have laboured more abundantly than they all. Are they willing to suffer for their brethren? I have thrown up my friends, reputation, ease, country; I have put my life in my hand, wandering into strange lands; I have given my body to be devoured by the deep, parched up with heat, consumed with toil and weariness, or whatsoever God should please to bring upon me. But does all this (be it more or less, it matters not) make me acceptable to God? Does all I ever did or can know, say, give, do, or suffer, justify me in his sight? Yea, or the constant use of all the means of grace? (which, nevertheless, is meet, right, and our bounden duty.) Or that I know nothing of myself; that I am, as touching outward moral righteousness, blameless? Or (to come closer yet) the having a rational conviction of all the truths of Christianity? Does all this give me a claim to the holy, heavenly, divine character of a Christian? By no means. If the oracles of God are true, if we are still to abide by 'the law and the testimony,' all these things, though when ennobled by faith in Christ they are holy, and just, and good, yet without it are dung and dross, meet only to be purged away by the fire that never shall be quenched.

"This, then, have I learned in the ends of the earth,—That I am fallen short of the glory of God; that my whole heart is altogether corrupt and abom-

inable ; and, consequently, my whole life ; (seeing it cannot be that an evil tree should bring forth good fruit ;) that alienated, as I am, from the life of God, I am a child of wrath, an heir of hell ; that my own works, my own sufferings, my own righteousness, are so far from reconciling me to an offended God, so far from making any atonement for the least of those sins which are more in number than the hairs of my head, that the most specious of them need an atonement themselves, or they cannot abide his righteous judgment ; that, having the sentence of death in my heart, and having nothing in or of myself to plead, I have no hope but that of being justified freely, through the redemption that is in Jesus. I have no hope but that if I seek, I shall find Christ, and ‘be found in him, not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.’

“If it be said that I have faith, (for many such things have I heard from many miserable comforters,) I answer, So have the devils, a sort of faith ; but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise. So the Apostles had even at Cana in Galilee, when Jesus first ‘manifested forth his glory ;’ even then they, in a sort, ‘believed on him ;’ but they had not then ‘the faith that overcometh the world.’ The faith I want is, a sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God.’ I want that faith which St. Paul recommends to all the world, especially in his Epistle to the Romans : that faith which enables every one that hath it to cry out, ‘I live not, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son

of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it; (though many imagine they have it, who have it not;) for whosoever hath it is freed from sin, the whole body of sin is destroyed in him. He is freed from fear, having 'peace with God through Christ, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.' And he is freed from doubt, having 'the love of God shed abroad in his heart through the Holy Ghost, which is given unto him;' which 'Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God.'*"

These convictions, painful and humiliating as they were to a man who had done and suffered so much in what he conceived to be the cause of true religion, were strengthened and confirmed by his intercourse with Peter Böhler, a learned Minister of the Moravian Church, who arrived in England at this time. Mr. Wesley was introduced to this distinguished German at the house of a Dutch merchant in London, on the 7th of February, and omitted no opportunity of conversing with him till the beginning of May, when the pious stranger embarked for Carolina. Mr. Wesley appears to have derived more evangelical light from Peter Böhler than from any other man with whom he had been acquainted up to this period. The following notices in his Journal show the deep impression which Böhler's conversation made upon his mind:—

"Saturday, March 4th, 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 5th, clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone

* Works, vol. i. pp. 76, 77.

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, 6th, 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 to do so; being still (as I had been many years) a zealous assertor of the impossibility of a death-bed repentance.

"Thursday, 23d, 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, 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, 23d, 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 only cry out, 'Lord, help thou my unbelief !'

"I asked Peter Böhler again, whether I ought not to refrain from teaching others. He said, 'No ; do not hide in the earth the talent God hath given you.' Accordingly, on Tuesday, 25th, I spoke clearly and fully at Blendon, to Mr. Delamotte's family, of the nature and fruits of faith. Mr. Broughton

and my brother were there. Mr. Broughton's great objection was, he could never think that I had not faith, who had done and suffered such things. My brother was very angry, and told me I did not know what mischief I had done by talking thus. And indeed it did please God then to kindle a fire, which, I trust, shall never be extinguished.

"Wednesday, May 3d, my brother had a long and particular conversation with Peter Böhler. And it now pleased God to open his eyes; so that he also saw clearly what was the nature of that one true living faith whereby alone, through grace, we are saved.

"Thursday, 4th, Peter Böhler left London, in order to embark for Carolina. O what a work hath God begun since his coming into England! such an one as shall never come to an end till heaven and earth pass away."

On his arrival at Southampton, Böhler addressed a very affectionate Latin letter to Mr. Wesley, urging him to the immediate exercise of faith in Christ, that he might be saved from the guilt and power of sin, and filled with peace, and joy, and holy love.

When the doctrine of salvation from sin, by faith in the Lord Jesus, accompanied by the inward witness of adoption, was first proposed to Mr. Charles Wesley, he opposed it with all his might, and was very angry with his brother for entertaining principles so directly contrary to those which Mr. Law had taught them, and which they had so cordially entertained. 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 Mr. Charles Wes-

ley, "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 endeavours? 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. 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 21st, 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 the earnest hope of soon attaining the object of his desire,—the knowledge of God reconciled 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

* Whitehead's Lives of John and Charles Wesley, vol. i. p. 154.

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 rest in God which he so earnestly sought.

Three days afterwards Mr. John Wesley received the same blessing. On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, he says, "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:—

"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 our 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 any thing 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 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 despitefully used me, and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there, what I now first felt in my heart." *

From this time the two brothers were new men. An experimental application of the blood of Christ to their consciences rendered them cheerful and happy, and produced in their hearts an intense love to their Saviour. Having obtained, by the simple exercise of faith in Christ, not only the abiding witness of the pardoning and adopting mercy of God, but also that purity of heart which they had long

* Works, vol. i. p. 103.

unsuccessfully endeavoured to obtain by works of righteousness and law, they were astonished at their former errors, and longed to make known the great salvation which is thus attainable by all. Before this period they served God because they feared him; now they loved him from a joyous assurance that he had first loved them. They confessed that up to this period they had been mere servants of God: now they stood in a filial relation to him; and because they were sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father. They had laboured with all fidelity to benefit mankind, because they felt this to be their duty; but now the love of Christ kindled in their breasts a generous and yearning affection for the whole human race, and a willingness even to lay down their lives, if others might only be converted and saved.

Charles, with his bodily strength impaired by illness, immediately began, in private conversations wherever he went, to recommend to others the salvation which he had so happily experienced, and with most encouraging success. In one month no fewer than thirty persons professed to have received the peace and joy of faith in the several private meetings at which he was present. Among these was the Rev. Henry Piers, the Vicar of Bexley, with whom he had become acquainted in consequence of his visits to the Delamotte family at Blendon, who regularly attended Bexley church on the Lord's day. Mr. Piers introduced the Wesleys to the Rev. Vincent Perronet, the pious Vicar of Shoreham, who became one of the most valued and faithful of their friends. Mr. Piers was present at the first Methodist Conference, which was held in London. He also published a very faithful sermon,

which he addressed to the Clergy at Sevenoaks about the same period.

Before he left Georgia, Mr. John Wesley had resolved, if possible, to visit the Moravian settlement at Hernhuth, in Upper Lusatia; a place which is situated on the borders of Bohemia, and about thirty English miles from Dresden; and he availed himself of this opportunity to fulfil his purpose. On his arrival he was deeply impressed with the order and godly discipline of the Church as there presented to his view, and still more with the discourses which he heard from the pulpit, and the religious experience of the brethren with whom he conversed. They all declared, as with one voice, that they had been made permanently happy and holy by believing in Christ; so that he was greatly strengthened and confirmed in those views of the truth which he had now received, and which he was unconsciously preparing to preach to others with almost unexampled publicity and effect.

CHAPTER III.

MEASURES ADOPTED BY THE WESLEYS FOR THE REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

FIELD PREACHING.

WHEN Mr. Wesley returned from Germany, he immediately began to preach justification by faith; with the penitential sorrow by which it is preceded, and the peace and holiness which invariably follow it. He did this in some of the churches of London, but more frequently in what he calls "societies,"

which then met in various parts of London and its vicinity. They are well described by Dr. Woodward, and had long been very useful in different parts of the land. It was at one of these "societies," in Aldersgate-street, that he had, some months before, found rest to his soul; and as they consisted almost entirely of professed members of the established Church, he seemed, as a matter of course, to claim relationship to them. In these small assemblies, which appear to have generally met in private houses, he declared what God had done for his soul, and exhorted the people also to taste and see that the Lord is gracious. Many believed the report, and were made happy in the God of their salvation.

He was thus employed 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 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." *

This was not the first time that Mr. Wesley had preached in the open air. He did this in Georgia, before Mr. Whitefield was ordained; † but it does

* Works, vol. i. p. 185.

† Ibid. vol. x. p. 447.

not appear that he had any intention of resuming the practice in England, till he was stimulated by the example and urgent advice of his friend. But having once adopted this mode of imparting religious instruction to the neglected classes of the community, he never abandoned it to the end of his life, being deeply convinced of its utility, and strenuously recommending the frequent use of it to all the Preachers who laboured in connexion with him. He confined not these labours to Bristol, but extended them to Bath, and especially to the colliers at Kingswood; being often surrounded by many thousands of willing and attentive hearers.

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.

As Mr. Charles Wesley recovered his strength, he preached in different churches, and frequently to the felons in Newgate, to whom he paid a most anxious and compassionate attention. He often visited them in their cells, composed hymns for their use, explained to them the way of salvation through faith in Christ, and exhorted them to trust in his atonement for pardon and eternal life. Not a few appeared, through his instrumentality, to be brought to repentance, and to a due preparation for the death to which they were appointed. Having recovered his strength, and being strenuously urged by Mr. Whitefield, on the 24th of June, 1739, he says, "I

prayed, and went forth in the name of Jesus Christ. I found near a thousand helpless sinners waiting for the word in Moorfields. I invited them in my Master's words, as well as name, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' The Lord was with me, even me, the meanest of his messengers, according to his promise. At St. Paul's, the psalms, lessons, &c., for the day, put new life into me; and so did the sacrament. My load was gone, and all my doubts and scruples. God shone on my path, and I knew this was his will concerning me. I walked to Kennington-common, and cried to multitudes upon multitudes, 'Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.' The Lord was my strength, and my mouth, and my wisdom. O that all would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness!" A few weeks afterwards he preached to about ten thousand people in Moorfields; and for several years he followed, with equal steps, both his brother and Mr. Whitefield, in laborious zeal and public usefulness.

The Wesleys were led to adopt this very unusual mode of proceeding through the force of circumstances, and a strong sense of duty; and not in consequence of any plan which they had previously conceived. When Mr. John Wesley returned 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." *

These extraordinary efforts were severely censured by many persons, as disorderly and irregular: but they were clearly justified by Scripture precedent, our blessed Lord and his Apostles frequently preaching in the open air as well as in the Jewish temple and synagogues. They were also justified by the necessity of the case: for it was only in this manner that the masses of ignorant and wicked people, with which England at that time abounded; could be effectually reached. They never attended any place of worship whatever; so that unless they had been followed to their haunts of ungodliness and dissipation, they must have perished without knowledge and without hope. The spiritual and moral benefit arising from field-preaching was incalculable; so that Mr. Wesley said, "It were better for me to die, than not to preach the Gospel; yea, and in the fields, either where I may not preach in the church, or where the church will not contain the congregation." † When he had been accustomed thus to preach in London for more than twenty years, he says, "A vast majority of the immense congre-

* Works, vol. vii. pp. 422, 423.

† Ibid. vol. xii. p. 79.

gation in Moorfields were deeply serious. One such hour might convince any impartial man of the expediency of field-preaching. What building, except St. Paul's church, would contain such a congregation? And if it would, what human voice could have reached them there? By repeated observations I find I can command thrice the number in the open air, that I can under a roof. And who can say the time for field-preaching is over, while, 1. Greater numbers than ever attend: 2. The converting as well as the convincing power of God is eminently present with them? *

The self-denial of the men who thus went forth into the highways and hedges, that they might instruct the ignorant and reclaim the lost, is very obvious; especially when it is recollected that their talents and education were of the first order, and such as qualified them to occupy a place in the highest society, as well as to excel in every branch of polite learning. Mr. Wesley thus forcibly expresses himself in his "Earnest Appeal:"—"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

* Works, vol. ii. p. 515.

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 every 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?

“Upon this conviction it is that we now do, for the good of souls, what you cannot, will not, dare not do. And we desire not that you should; but this one thing we may reasonably desire of you: Do not increase the difficulties which are already so great, that, without the mighty power of God, we must sink under them. Do not assist in trampling down a little handful of men who for the present stand in the gap between ten thousand poor wretches and destruction, till you find some others to take their place.” *

THE FORMATION OF SOCIETIES.

ONE unavoidable effect of the powerful preaching of the Wesleys was the formation of religious societies. Many of the people, being deeply impressed with the truth which they heard, became alarmed

* Works, vol. viii. pp. 230, 231.

for the consequences of their sin, and desired further instruction in the way of salvation; and those who had been renewed in the spirit of their minds longed for those spiritual helps which Christian fellowship supplies. Hence such as were awakened to a right perception of divine things were, at their own request, united together, for their mutual comfort and edification.

The time at which the first of the United Societies was formed is marked by Mr. Wesley with sufficient exactness. The following is his own account:—
“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

* “Twelve came the first Thursday night; forty, the next; soon after a hundred.”—Wesley's Works, vol. vii. p. 207.

watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation." *

He speaks more definitely in his "Earnest Appeal," where he says, "The case in London stands thus: In November, 1739, two gentlemen, then unknown to me, Mr. Ball and Mr. Watkins, came and desired me once and again to preach in a place called the Foundery, near Moorfields. With much reluctance, I at length complied.—The United Society began a little after." †

The larger of the United Societies Mr. Wesley divided into classes, each of which was placed under the care of a Leader, and met once a week in order to the spiritual improvement of the members.

"It can scarce be conceived," says he, "what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to bear one another's burdens, and naturally to care for each other. As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for, each other. And, 'speaking the truth in love, they grew up into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplied, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, increased unto the edifying of itself in love.'" ‡

The title given by the Wesleys to the societies which were raised up by their instrumentality, describes their nature in one very important particular. They were not distinct and independent churches, but *United Societies*, being all governed by the same dis-

* Works, vol. viii. p. 269. † Ibid. vol. viii. pp. 37, 38.

‡ Ibid. vol. viii. p. 254.

cipline, and placed under the same pastoral care. The adoption of the connexional principle from the very first has led to the most beneficial results. Not only has an identity of character been impressed upon all the societies, but those which have been strong, in consequence of their numbers and property, have rendered seasonable help to such as were poor and feeble; and thus the work in many places has been perpetuated where it would otherwise have become extinct, and extended to neglected districts where the truth could not otherwise have been carried. What one or two societies could not do has been easily accomplished by the combined exertions of the body. Its strength, under God, consists in its unity; and were this dissolved, the Methodist societies would be comparatively powerless, both at home, and in the Mission field. All attempts to invade the connexional principle Mr. Wesley strenuously resisted; and his sons in the Gospel have hitherto wisely followed in the same course. Without adopting the principle in question, the Wesleys might have been very useful in large and populous towns; but neither they nor their successors could have carried the truth into the scattered villages and hamlets of the agricultural districts, where many hundreds of small chapels now stand, surrounded by the cottages of the poor, and frequented by thousands of devout and happy peasants. It is thus that the system of Methodism adapts itself to the necessities of the humbler classes of society.

“It was by this means,” the formation of societies, says Dr. Adam Clarke, “that we have been enabled to establish permanent and holy churches over the world. Mr. Wesley saw the necessity of this from the beginning. Mr. Whitefield, when he separated

from Mr. Wesley, did not follow it. What was the consequence? The fruit of Mr. Whitefield's labours died with himself. Mr. Wesley's fruit remains, grows, increases, and multiplies exceedingly. Did Mr. Whitefield see his error? He did; but not till it was too late. His people, long unused to it, would not come under this discipline. Have I authority to say so? I have; and you shall have it. Forty years ago I travelled in the Bradford, Wilts., Circuit, with Mr. John Pool. Himself told me the following anecdote. Mr. Pool was well known to Mr. Whitefield; and having met him one day, he accosted him in the following manner:—Whitefield: 'Well, John, art thou still a Wesleyan?' Pool: 'Yes, Sir; and I thank God that I have the privilege of being in connexion with him, and one of his preachers.' Whitefield: 'John, thou art in thy right place. My brother Wesley acted wisely. The souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in class, and thus preserved the fruits of his labour. This I neglected; and my people are a rope of sand.' And what now remains of this great man's labours? Multitudes were converted under his ministry, and are gone to God; but there is no spiritual succession."*

This statement of Dr. Clarke, though substantially true, needs some qualification. The labours of Mr. Whitefield, it is presumed, were principally merged in those of Lady Huntingdon's Connexion, and in the Dissenting churches. It is in these communities that the fruit of his most powerful and effective ministry is to be traced.

Some of the earlier societies formed by Mr. Wesley were severely persecuted, not only by riotous men, but in domestic life, and by their employers; being

* Miscellaneous Works, vol. xiii. p. 257.

not unfrequently deprived of their only means of subsistence. The following is his own appeal to a persecutor of this class :—“ You employed A. B. for several years. By your own account, he was an honest, diligent man. You had no objection to him but his following ‘ this way.’ For this reason you turn him off. In a short time, having spent his little all, and having no supply, he wants bread. So does his family too, as well as himself. Before he can get into other business to procure it, through want of convenient food to eat, and raiment to put on, he sickens and dies. This is not an imaginary scene. I have known the case, though too late to remedy it.

“ ‘ And what then?’ *What then!* you are a murderer! ‘ O earth! cover not thou his blood!’ No; it doth not. ‘ The cry thereof hath entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth.’ And God requireth it at your hands; and will require it in an hour when you think not. For you have as effectually murdered that man, as if you had stabbed him to the heart.

“ It is not I then who ruin and starve that family: it is you; you who call yourself a Protestant! you who cry out against the persecuting spirit of the Papists! Ye fools and blind! What are ye better than they? Why, Edmond Bonner would have starved the heretics in prison; whereas you starve them in their own houses!” *

EMPLOYMENT OF PREACHERS WHO HAD NOT RECEIVED EPISCOPAL ORDINATION.

As the Wesleys were led through the force of what they conceived to be providential circumstances

* Works, vol. viii. p. 127.

in adopting the practice of field-preaching, and in the formation of religious societies, so they were induced in the same manner to accept the assistance of Preachers who had neither been educated with reference to the Christian ministry, nor formally ordained to that holy service. The first that was thus employed was Thomas Maxfield, a young man, who had been converted under Mr. John Wesley's preaching at Bristol, in May, 1739. He became deeply pious; and prayed, exhorted, and expounded the Scriptures with uncommon power. Lady Huntingdon, who knew him well at this period of his life, speaks of him in terms of the highest admiration. He was appointed to assist in the society in London in the absence of the Wesleys, and there he began to preach. Complaint of this was forwarded to Mr. Wesley, who hastened to London, with all speed, to stop the alleged irregularity. His mother then lived in his house adjoining the Foundery. On his arrival she perceived that his countenance was expressive of dissatisfaction, and inquired the cause. "Thomas Maxfield," said he abruptly, "has turned Preacher, I find." She looked attentively at him, and replied, "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 the advice, and submitted to what he believed to be the order of God.*

One of the most distinguished of all Mr. Wesley's early Preachers was John Nelson, a stone-mason of Birstal, in Yorkshire; a man of deep and fervent

* Moore's Life of Wesley, vol. i. p. 507.

piety, of strong and manly sense, of ready and pungent wit, and of admirable firmness and resolution. His Journal, relating with beautiful simplicity the particulars of his conversion, of his ministry, and of his patient sufferings in the cause of Christ, (for he was unrighteously forced from his family, and sent to be a soldier, for the crime of calling sinners to repentance,) is one of the most interesting and instructive publications of the kind in the English language. Of this truly great, though comparatively unlettered, man, Mr. Wesley gives the following account, having visited Nelson at Birstal in the year 1742: "Hearing he was at home, I sent for him to our inn; whence he immediately carried me to his house, and gave me an account of the strange manner wherein he had been led on since we parted in London.

"He had full business there, and large wages. But from the time of his finding peace with God, it was continually upon his mind, that he must return (though he knew not why) to his native place. He did so, about Christmas, in the year 1740. His relations and acquaintance soon began to inquire what he thought of this new faith; and whether he believed there was any such thing as a man knowing that his sins were forgiven. John told them point-blank, that this new faith, as they called it, was the old faith of the Gospel; and that he himself was as sure his sins were forgiven, as he could be of the shining of the sun. This was soon noised abroad; more and more came to inquire concerning these strange things. Some put him upon the proof of the great truths which such inquiries naturally led him to mention; and thus he was brought unawares to quote, explain, compare, and enforce several parts

of Scripture. This he did at first, sitting in his house, till the company increased so that the house could not contain them. Then he stood at the door, which he was commonly obliged to do, in the evening, as soon as he came from work. God immediately set his seal to what was spoken; and several believed, and therefore declared that God was merciful also to their unrighteousness, and had forgiven all their sins."*

In this manner John Nelson was employed as a teacher of Christianity at this early period. He afterwards extended his labours, by preaching during his dinner hour, and in the week-day evenings, as well as on the Sabbath, in the surrounding towns and villages, till the magistrates interfered, and sent him into the army, where he maintained his integrity, and nobly confessed his Lord. He was marched through Leeds and York to Newcastle-upon-Tyne; and at all these places the people assembled to gaze upon the Methodist Preacher, now compelled for Christ's sake to wear a red coat, and a hat with a towering feather. The officers sometimes treated him with contumely; but he met every insult with the meekness of wisdom. Subsequently to his liberation he was entirely devoted to the work of preaching the Gospel; and died, as he had lived, a good soldier of Jesus Christ, in the year 1774.

From Leeds, where he expired, his remains were conveyed to Birstal for interment; and such was the respect which his sufferings, his pious zeal, and his uprightness had produced, that the funeral procession, on its arrival at Birstal, consisting of a solid mass of human beings, extended nearly half a mile. William Shent, of Leeds, a Local Preacher, and a

* Works, vol i. pp. 371, 372.

personal friend of the deceased, gave out appropriate hymns as the people passed along, and afterwards preached a funeral sermon at the door of John's cottage: the very place where he began his ministry, and from which Mr. Wesley had often addressed willing crowds.

John Nelson's answers to cavillers, and the reproofs which he promptly administered, were often most effective. Two instances may be given in illustration. When he had been pressed for a soldier, and was standing under a guard in the street at Leeds, a jolly, well-dressed woman came to him, and, putting her face close to his, said, "Now, Nelson, where is thy God? Thou saidst, at Shent's door, as thou wast preaching, thou wast no more afraid of his promise failing, than thou wast of dropping through the heart of the earth." He answered, "Look into the seventh chapter of Micah, and read the eighth and tenth verses." The words of those verses are, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise: when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God?"

When brought before one of the Aldermen of Nottingham, that guardian of the public peace said, "I wonder you can't stay in your own places. You might be convinced by this time, that the mob of Nottingham will never let you preach quietly in this town." John quickly responded, "I beg pardon, Sir; I did not know before now that this town was governed by a mob; for most such towns are governed by magistrates." The Alderman scolded; but his blushes betrayed the emotion which John's gentle and well-timed sarcasm had created.

From the time at which the preaching of Messrs. Maxfield, Westell, Richards, and Nelson received the sanction of the two Wesleys, other men of similar piety and gifts offered their services, and were accepted; so that, besides a large number of Local Preachers who laboured only in their own respective neighbourhoods, in the year 1765 the number of those who were wholly devoted to the work of preaching the Gospel, and were not episcopally ordained, amounted to ninety-four; and at the time of Mr. Wesley's death they amounted to three hundred, including thirteen in the West Indies, and six in Nova-Scotia and Newfoundland. To these must be added the Ministers belonging to the powerful and rapidly-increasing Connexion in the United States of America.

Many of the Preachers, in common with the two Wesleys by whom they were sanctioned and employed, endured severe and cruel persecutions, especially in the earlier periods of their ministry. Of this several instances are upon record. Two only will we mention in this place. Under the date of June, 11th, 1744, Mr. Wesley says in his Journal, "I left Newcastle, and in the afternoon met John Nelson at Durham, with Thomas Beard, another quiet and peaceable man, who had lately been torn from his trade, and wife, and children, and sent away as a soldier, that is, banished from all that was near and dear to him, and constrained to dwell among lions, for no other crime, either committed or pretended, than that of calling sinners to repentance. But his soul was in nothing terrified by his adversaries. Yet the body, after a while, sunk under its burden. He was then lodged in the hospital, at Newcastle, where he still praised God continually. His fever increas-

ing, he was let blood. His arm festered, mortified, and was cut off: two or three days after which God signed his discharge, and called him up to his eternal home.

‘ Servant of God, well done ! Well hast thou fought
The better fight ; who single hast maintain’d,
Against revolted multitudes, the cause
Of God ; in word mightier than they in arms.’ ”

Mr. Thomas Mitchell gives the following account :
—“ 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 which I had ever known. But in every temptation God made a way to escape, that I might be able to bear it.

“ On Sunday, August 7th, 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 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 legs and arms, 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 till 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 man 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!'

"Here they left me penniless and friendless: for no one durst come near me. And my strength was nearly gone; so that I had much ado to walk or even to stand. But from the beginning to the end my mind was in perfect peace. I found no anger or resentment, but could heartily pray for my persecutors. But I knew not what to do, or where to go. Indeed, one of our friends lived three or four miles off. But I was so weak and ill, that it did not seem possible for me to get so far. However, I trusted in God, and set out; and at length I got to the house. The family did every thing for me that was in their power: they got me clothes, and whatever else was needful. I rested four days with them, in which time my strength was tolerably restored. Then I went into the Circuit, where I met with more persecution. As I was preaching in a certain village in the Fen, the mob came into the house, and broke through the congregation, in order to pull me down; but the good woman of the house took me into the parlour, and stood in the door with a great kitchen-poker in her hand, and told the mob, the first man that came near the door, she would knock him down. As she was very big with child, and near the time of her travail, this, with the sight of the great poker, kept them off, so that they could not get at me. However, they stayed for some time, and then left the house without doing much harm. After they were gone, I gave an exhortation, went to prayer, and then went to bed in peace. In the midst of this persecution, many were brought to the saving knowledge of God. And as the sufferings of Christ abounded, so our consolations by Christ abounded

also. As to the lions at Wrangle, an appeal to the Court of King's Bench made both them and the Minister quiet as lambs." *

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 hymn, beginning,

"The God of Abraham praise,"

was his composition; and also the beautiful and appropriate tune which is set to the hymn,

"Lo, He comes, with clouds descending,"

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

* Lives of Early Methodist Preachers, vol. i. pp. 74—77.

† Works, vol. vii. p. 54.

were able and effective Preachers, is attested by the fruit of their labours in every part of the land.

INSTITUTION OF AN ITINERANT MINISTRY.

WHEN the Wesleys began to preach the doctrine of salvation by faith, they did not confine their ministrations to any particular town, much less to any one congregation. From London Mr. John Wesley, as we have already seen, extended his labours to Bristol, Kingswood, and Bath; and, in the course of a very few years, he visited the most populous towns and districts in England; especially Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nottingham, and the most thickly-peopled parts of Yorkshire, Staffordshire, and Cornwall. His brother Charles breathed the same spirit of holy zeal and enterprise, and followed in the same path of shame and glory with equal boldness and fidelity. Personal ease and honour they appear never to have thought of. Life itself was with them of no account, except as it was employed in bringing souls to Christ. The want of what others would have deemed suitable places to preach in, was to them no difficulty. When the churches were closed against them, they were ready to deliver their evangelical message in a private house, in a barn, in a public road, in the market-place, in a field; as our blessed Lord preached on a mountain, upon a plain, and in the fishing-boat of Simon Peter. Preaching two or three times a day, and travelling with great rapidity, their voices were soon heard in the length and breadth of the land. The neglected populace of London, the Papists of Ireland, the miners of Cornwall, the colliers of Kingswood, of Staffordshire, and of the north, with the keelmen of the Tyne, engaged the especial sympathy and shared the

labours of these apostolic men. After a few years, Charles became a family-man, and confined his ministry chiefly to London and Bristol. John's itinerancy continued, without abatement, to the end of his protracted life.

The ministry which was assigned to their fellow-labourers was of a somewhat similar kind. Every one of them was required to be a "Travelling Preacher." The country was divided into Circuits, to each of which two or three regular Itinerants were generally appointed. Some of the Circuits were, at first, very extensive, embracing a whole county, and in some cases a considerably larger space; but they became more contracted as the work spread, and the preaching-places and societies were multiplied. Still, however, the Preachers were required to visit in rotation the several towns, villages, and hamlets which were committed to their care, usually preaching every evening at least, during the week, teaching also from house to house, visiting the sick, meeting the societies, and every where maintaining the discipline to which the whole body was pledged. From these stations the Preachers were liable to be removed every year; and they seldom remained in any of them more than two years in succession. The same order is observed to this day. Thus the various talents of the Preachers were brought to bear upon the different congregations, the peculiar tastes of all were gratified, and the interest of novelty was rendered subservient to the cause of religion. Careless persons, who would not hear a Preacher with whose name they were familiar, would often attend the ministry of a stranger; and many, in this manner, were converted from the error of their way.

THE ERECTION OF SEPARATE PLACES OF WORSHIP.

It has been sometimes intimated, that the erection of separate places of worship by the two Wesleys, as well as field-preaching, was occasioned solely by their exclusion from the churches of the Establishment. But this is not a correct view of the subject. They had no right to the general occupancy of the churches; and to several of them they were admitted to the end of their lives, both as a matter of courtesy, and with reference to the spiritual benefit of the people. But had all the churches of the land been open to them, the means which they felt it their duty to adopt for the revival and extension of scriptural Christianity, would have rendered other places of worship indispensably necessary. The pulpits of the national Church could not be occupied by the Preachers, Travelling and Local, whose ministrations the brothers deemed it incumbent upon them to sanction. Accommodation also was wanting for the meetings of societies and classes; for love-feasts, watch-night services, and prayer-meetings; as well as for week-night preaching, and preaching at five o'clock in the morning; all of which they considered necessary in order to the accomplishment of their design.

The first chapel that the Wesleys themselves erected was in Bristol; but the first that 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 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

enerated 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 congregations 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 it; 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.

THE PUBLICATION OF BOOKS.

ONE of the most important and successful means adopted by the two Wesleys for promoting the interests of religion, was the publication, in a cheap and popular form, of a large number of interesting and instructive books. Before he went to Georgia, Mr. John Wesley, as we have seen, published a single Sermon, besides a revised edition of Kempis's "Christian's Pattern;" but it was not till after he had returned to England, and obtained the salvation of the Gospel through faith in the Lord Jesus, that he was really aware of the power of the press, and began to use it to the full extent of his ability. He then entered upon a course of literary labour of the most gigantic kind, in connexion with his incessant travelling, preaching, epistolary correspondence, and the pastoral care of his spiritual children in all parts of the kingdom. At an early period of his public labours, he sent forth three volumes of Sermons, explaining, with unrivalled simplicity and strength, the leading doctrines upon which he had been accustomed to preach; and his "Appeals to men of Reason and Religion," defending those irregular proceedings into which he had been led, and demonstrating their necessity. Upon the back of this most powerful and impressive volume, Dr. Doddridge wrote the significant exclamation, "How forcible are right words!" These works were attended by an almost incredible number of tracts and pamphlets, original

and selected ; some of them intended for gratuitous distribution, and all admirably fitted to turn men from sin, and to build them up in holiness.

He published a considerable number of controversial works, in answer to the objections which Dr. Church and others urged against his proceedings and theological views, and in defence of his ministry and character against the reasonings and bitter sarcasms of Bishops Lavington and Warburton ; but it was in practical divinity that he took the greatest delight. That the writings of our elder Divines, Puritan and Conformist, might be rendered available to general edification, he published selections from them in fifty volumes, under the title of "A Christian Library," presenting a beautiful and agreeable variety of style and manner, and of biographical, didactic, and practical compositions. After a lapse of several years this invaluable compilation was succeeded by a monthly Magazine ; consisting of articles partly original, and partly selected ; and containing at once "milk" for such as were "babes" in understanding and knowledge, and "strong meat" for those that were of riper intellectual age.

To him it was a matter of solid gratification that his ministry, and that of his "fellow-helpers to the truth," roused many a dormant mind to reflection and inquiry ; and as it was his anxious wish to raise up an intelligent as well as a holy people, he published concise Grammars of the English, French, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages ; with an epitome of the Roman History, and a Compendium of Logic. To these he added an abridged History of England, and another of the Christian Church, in four volumes each ; besides a Compendium of Natural Philosophy, in five volumes, that

peasants and persons of neglected education might have the means of acquiring useful knowledge at the smallest possible expense of time and money. In providing cheap literature, he anticipated the movements of more modern times by many years ; and in this kind of service he laboured almost alone for nearly half a century. Moral and sacred poetry he strongly recommended, and published selections of this kind in three volumes ; and portable editions of Milton and Young, with notes explaining the difficult passages, and directing attention to the finest paragraphs.

Desirous of promoting in all his societies the study of the holy Scriptures, as the source and standard of divine truth, he published, in a quarto volume, an amended translation of the New Testament with Explanatory Notes, remarkable for their spirituality, terseness, and point. A similar work, but less original in its character, he published on the Old Testament in three quarto volumes. We hazard nothing in saying, that no man ever lived who placed a larger mass of evangelical and useful literature within the reach of the common people. The works which he published were not merely harmless, but beneficial ; calculated and intended to make men wise and holy.

Mr. Charles Wesley was an elegant scholar, and possessed a fine classical taste ; but as a literary man he engaged in a kind of service very different from that which occupied the more versatile genius of his brother. Prose composition he almost entirely neglected ; except that he wrote two sermons for the press,—one on, “Awake, thou that sleepest,” and the other on Earthquakes,—and for many years kept a daily record of passing occurrences. Above almost

all men that ever lived, he was the child of feeling; and from the time of his conversion, till his fires were quenched in death, he thought and breathed in sacred verse. His was not "made poetry," but "poetry that made itself." It flowed from the depth of his heart in a perennial stream, as clear as it was full and strong. He supplied the Methodists with hymns suited to every occasion, and on all possible subjects connected with their spiritual concerns; and that with an energy, a purity, and a copiousness of diction, and with a richness of evangelical sentiment, of which the Christian church had perhaps never before seen an equal example. There is scarcely a feeling of the heart in the entire process of salvation, from the first dawn of light upon the understanding, and the incipient sorrows of penitence, to the joys of pardon, the entire sanctification of the soul, and its triumphant entrance into paradise, which he has not expressed in genuine poetry. All that he and his brother taught from the pulpit, of the evil of sin, the glory of Christ, the efficacy of the atonement, the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, "the good fight of faith," the peace and joy of believing, and the ecstatic anticipations of hope, he enabled the people to sing in strains worthy of the brightest days of the primitive church, when she had received the pentecostal baptism of fire. Never were people so favoured with respect to the substance of their psalmody as the Wesleyan Connexion has always been.

To some persons it may perhaps appear incredible, but it is, nevertheless, a fact, that, independently of his own original works, which occupy fourteen large octavo volumes, Mr. John Wesley abridged, revised, and printed no fewer than one hundred and seventeen distinct publications, reckoning his Christian

Library, his Histories, and his Philosophy, as only one each; and that the brothers, separately and unitedly, published forty-seven poetical tracts and volumes, most of which were the compositions of Mr. Charles Wesley, and adapted to the use of public, domestic, and private devotion; besides a large number of psalms which were inserted in the "Arminian Magazine." Apparently without design, Mr. Charles Wesley has anticipated every want of the Connexion, so far as devotional poetry is concerned. Notwithstanding the difference between his times and the present, there is not a religious service, whether relating to Missions, the Christian sacraments, or the ordination of Ministers, for which he has not most appropriately provided.

Mr. Charles Wesley was critically acquainted with the holy Scriptures, and had a profound knowledge of theology, as must appear to every attentive reader of his poetry. To a great extent, it forms a beautiful commentary on the Bible.

THE ADOPTION OF A SIMPLE AND IMPRESSIVE MODE OF PREACHING.

WHEN Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, having found what they had long sought,—the peace and holiness which are consequent upon the true Christian faith,—began to exert themselves to effect a revival of religion in the nation, they employed a mode of preaching adapted to this end. They laid aside the practice of reading their sermons, and addressed the people from the fulness of their hearts; yet without the slightest approach to rhapsody. The subjects of their ministry were, at first, comparatively few, but immensely important. True religion, they strenuously maintained, does not consist

in right opinions, nor in correct morals, nor in harmlessness of conduct, nor in attendance upon Christian ordinances, necessary as these things are in their several places ; but it is the life of God in the soul of man ; a conformity to the divine image ; the love of God and of all mankind for his sake, constantly expressing itself in acts of piety, benevolence, and righteousness. They contended, that of this all mankind are naturally destitute ; and that they can attain it in no other way than by believing in Christ. Love to God, which they described as the root and principle of all holiness, they declared to be a grateful affection, arising, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, from an assurance of God's love to us ; so that justification, and the inward witness of our adoption, precede sanctification, though they are inseparably connected with it. This happiness and purity they declared to be attainable by all men, and attainable now ; and hence they offered to the most unworthy of mankind, as the free gift of God, a present salvation from the guilt, the power, and the misery of sin. All believers they exhorted to go on unto perfection ; assuring them, upon the testimony of holy Scripture, that they might be saved in this life from all inward as well as all outward sin ; and love God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. The necessity of a holy life, as the fruit of faith, and as emanating from the principle of divine love, they enforced with unceasing earnestness, and with a constant reference to the strict account which every one must soon render to the Judge of quick and dead. The offices of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, in their direct connexion with the present and everlasting salvation of mankind, formed the prominent subjects of their

ministrations. In Christianity they found a perfect remedy for all the miseries of our fallen world ; and hence they preached under a plenary conviction of the absolute truth of the doctrine which they inculcated, and felt it to be worthy of all acceptance. In these respects, their fellow-labourers were like-minded with them. They described the new birth as consisting in an entire change of heart from sin to holiness ; and with peculiar earnestness they declared it to be absolutely and universally necessary in order to final salvation. On this vital subject their ministry was marked by an especial solemnity and force.

The principles by which Mr. Wesley was guided in the formation of his theological views, and the manner in which he endeavoured to teach mankind, he has distinctly stated in the incomparable preface to his sermons, which he first published in the year 1746.

“ To candid, reasonable men,” says he, “ I am not afraid to lay open what have been the inmost thoughts of my heart. I have thought, I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit, come from God, and returning to God ; just hovering over the great gulf, till a few moments hence I am no more seen ; I drop into an unchangeable eternity. I want to know one thing, the way to heaven, how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way : for this very end he came down from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book ! At any price, give me the book of God ! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book. Here then I am, far from the busy ways

of men. I sit down alone. Only God is here. In his presence I open, I read his book; for this end, to find the way to heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does any thing appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of lights, 'Lord, is it not thy word, If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God? Thou givest liberally, and upbraidest not. Thou hast said, If any be willing to do thy will, he shall know. I I am willing to do, let me know thy will.' I then search after, and consider, parallel passages of Scripture, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remain, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God; and then the writings whereby being dead they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach."

With respect to the right manner of preaching, he thus speaks in his notes on our Lord's Sermon upon the Mount: "Through this whole discourse we cannot but observe the most exact method which can possibly be conceived. Every paragraph, every sentence, is closely connected with that which precedes, and that which follows it. And is not this the pattern to every Christian Preacher? If any, then, are able to follow it without any premeditation, well; if not, let them not dare to preach without it. No rhapsody, no incoherency, whether the things spoken be true or false, comes from the Spirit of Christ."

The Wesleys preached and exhorted, that they might make the most unlettered of their hearers understand the true nature of Christianity, and induce them to work out their salvation with fear and trem-

bling; and they felt that unless they succeeded in this, they only spent their strength for nought. They engaged in the duties of the ministry under a deep sense of their responsibility both to God and man, and left all self-display and artificial modes of address to the vain men who seek their reward in popular admiration.

Mr. John Wesley's severe labours excited the kind sympathy of one of the Irish Prelates, who ordained Mr. Thomas Maxfield, the first of the Lay-Preachers, Priest; saying, at the same time, "Mr. Maxfield, I ordain you to assist that good man, (Mr. Wesley,) that he may not work himself to death." *

CHAPTER IV.

THE REVIVAL AND SPREAD OF RELIGION THROUGH THE LABOURS OF THE TWO WESLEYS, AND OF THEIR CO-ADJUTORS.

AMONG other significant directions which Mr. Wesley gave to his Preachers was this:—"Go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most." He adopted the same principle as the rule of his own proceedings; and hence he went, not to those places where he was likely to meet with a kind reception, but where the people were the most ignorant, wicked, and neglected. In those times the criminal law of England was terribly sanguinary. Executions were numerous and frequent; and to the end of their lives the brothers were in the habit of visiting convicts under sentence

* Wesley's Works, vol. iii. p. 131.

of death, and of affectionately pointing them to the throne of the divine mercy, from which no penitent and believing suppliant was ever sent empty away. They felt that Christ's atonement met all the necessities of the most guilty and abject of mankind. With the same feeling they visited, in the first instance, the most wretched of the uninstructed masses in the mining and manufacturing districts, and then the more scattered population in other parts of the land. It often happened that their clerical garb failed entirely to secure for them the slightest respect, and their lives were in the greatest jeopardy. In not a few instances the Clergy, forgetting what was becoming in the character which they sustained, were directly concerned in exciting the hostility of mobs against them, particularly in Staffordshire; and at Epworth, the Clergyman, in a state of drunkenness assaulted Mr. Wesley before a thousand people assembled together in the church, and drove him away from the Lord's table, because he preached in the fields. Yet the brothers, with admirable calmness and fidelity, pursued their course of duty "through good report, and through evil report;" and lived to see nearly the whole land, including the Isle of Man, and the Norman Islands, divided into Circuits, and regularly occupied by their zealous, intrepid, and self-denying fellow-labourers. Numerous societies were also formed, the members of which submitting to a system of godly discipline and order, were every where seen "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost."

Perhaps the most distinguished and honourable convert of whom the devoted brothers could boast was their venerable mother; a woman of great personal beauty, of high moral worth, and of a very

strong and cultivated mind. On the third of September 1739, Mr. John Wesley says, "I talked largely with my mother, who told me that, till a short time since, she had scarce heard such a thing mentioned, as the having forgiveness of sins now, or God's Spirit bearing witness with our spirit: much less did she imagine that this was the common privilege of all true believers. 'Therefore,' said she, 'I never durst ask for it myself. But two or three weeks ago, while my son Hall was pronouncing those words, in delivering the cup to me, *The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee*, the words struck through my heart, and I knew God for Christ's sake had forgiven *me* all *my* sins.'

"I asked whether her father (Dr. Annesley) had not the same faith; and whether she had not heard him preach it to others. She answered, he had it himself; and declared a little before his death, that for more than forty years he had no darkness, no fear, no doubt at all, of his being accepted in the Beloved; but that, nevertheless, she did not remember to have heard him preach, no, not once, explicitly upon it. Whence she supposed he also looked upon it as the peculiar blessing of a few; not as promised to all the people of God."*

A few days after this conversation she accompanied her son John to Kennington, and heard him preach in the open air, to nearly twenty thousand people. About three years afterwards, she died in the faith and hope of the Gospel; having "no doubt, or fear, nor any desire but (as soon as God should call) to depart and to be with Christ." On the day of her death, says Mr. John Wesley, "I went to my mother, and found her change was near. I sat down

* Works, vol. i. pp. 222, 223.

on the bed-side. She was in her last conflict, unable to speak, but, I believe quite sensible. Her look was calm and serene, and her eyes fixed upward, while we commended her soul to God. From three to four the silver cord was loosing, and the wheel breaking at the cistern; and then, without any struggle, or sigh, or groan, the soul was set at liberty. We stood round 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.'

Having given an account of her funeral, he adds, "We set up a plain stone at the head of her grave, inscribed with the following words:—'Here lies the body of Mrs. Susanna Wesley, the youngest and last surviving daughter of Dr. Samuel Annesley.

'IN sure and certain hope to rise,
And claim her mansion in the skies,
A Christian here her flesh laid down,
The cross exchanging for a crown.

'True daughter of affliction, she,
Inured to pain and misery,
Mourn'd a long night of griefs and fears,
A legal night of seventy years.

'The Father then reveal'd his Son,
Him in the broken bread made known:
She knew and felt her sins forgiven,
And found the earnest of her heaven.

'Meet for the fellowship above,
She heard the call, Arise, my love!
I come, her dying looks replied,
And lamblike as her Lord she died.'

By some writers these lines have been severely criticised, as not doing justice to the high intellectual character of this very excellent woman; and by

others they have been praised for their poetic beauty. The most obvious circumstance connected with them is, that they present a correct and striking picture of the minds of the two brothers, by whom they were used. These men of taste and of cultivated understanding knew her high mental character better than any of her modern admirers; for she had been the best earthly "guide of their youth;" but they knew that, through life, with all her sincerity, she had fallen short of the full Christian salvation, not having even dared to ask of God the direct and abiding witness of her adoption. That she had at last obtained this pearl of great price, and with her latest breath declared its reality and value, was to them an occasion of holy gratitude and rejoicing. Had their revered mother possessed the intellect of Bacon or of Newton, their glorying on her account would still have been, that Christ was formed in her heart by faith; and that she had borne a clear and distinct witness to the truth of that neglected doctrine which it was the chief business of their lives to promulgate. With St. Paul they resolved to "know nothing," comparatively, not even intellect, or literature, or philosophy, "but Christ and him crucified." With respect to sentiment, Mrs. Wesley's epitaph is such a one as Ignatius or Polycarp might have written. It is Christian all over.

In the early part of their itinerant ministry the two Wesleys visited Wales, where they found Mr. Howell Harris, an educated layman, successfully engaged in the same service. His views of Christian theology were Calvinistic; and hence he rather laboured in connexion with Mr. Whitefield than with them; yet they were all of one heart, though not of one judgment on every subject. They cultivated

each other's friendship, and for many years were the helpers of each other's joy.

It was by the instrumentality of Howell Harris that Mr. Marmaduke Gwynne, of Garth, in Wales, was brought to the knowledge of the truth. His house was for some years a home to the Wesleys, when they visited the Principality; and as he was a Magistrate, he was able to afford them protection against mobs, and persecuting individuals. The daughter of Mr. Gwynne afterwards became the wife of Mr. Charles Wesley, whom she survived many years.

The work which spread with rapidity at home also broke out in the British army, then serving in Flanders. John Haime, belonging to the Queen's Regiment of Dragoons, having been brought to the knowledge of God in England, was stirred up to preach to his companions in arms, many of whom were grossly wicked. The consequence was, that some hundreds of them were converted, and united together in religious society. John often preached from twenty to thirty times in a week, and was so intent upon promoting the spiritual good of others as sometimes to forget to take his necessary food. The following extract from his Life will serve to show something of his spirit, and that of his brethren:—
“On the 1st of May, 1745, we had a full trial of our faith at Fontenoy. Some days before, one of our brethren, standing at his tent-door, broke out into raptures of joy, knowing his departure was at hand; and when he went into the field of battle declared, ‘I am going to rest in the bosom of Jesus.’ Indeed this day God was pleased to prove our little flock, and to show them his mighty power. They showed such courage and boldness in the fight as made the officers, as well as soldiers, amazed. When wounded,

some cried out, 'I am going to my Beloved.' Others, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' And many that were not wounded earnestly desired to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. When William Clements had his arm broken by a musket-ball, they would have carried him out of the battle; but he said, 'No; I have an arm left to hold my sword: I will not go yet.' When a second shot broke his other arm, he said, 'I am as happy as I can be out of paradise.' John Evans, having both his legs taken off by a cannon-ball, was laid across a cannon to die: where, as long as he could speak, he was praising God with joyful lips.

"For my own part, I stood the hottest fire of the enemy for a bout seven hours. But I told my comrades, 'The French have no ball made that will kill me this day.' After about seven hours, a cannon-ball killed my horse under me. An officer cried out aloud, 'Haime, where is your God now?' I answered, 'Sir, he is here with me; and he will bring me out of this battle.' Presently, a cannon-ball took off his head. My horse fell upon me, and some cried out, 'Haime is gone!' But I replied, 'He is not gone yet.' I soon disengaged myself, and walked on, praising God. I was exposed both to the enemy, and to our own horse; but that did not discourage me at all; for I knew the God of Jacob was with me. I had a long way to go through all our horse; the balls flying on every side. And all the way lay multitudes bleeding, groaning, or just dead. Surely I was as in the fiery furnace; but it did not singe a hair of my head. The hotter the battle grew, the more strength was given me. I was as full of joy as I could contain. As I was quitting the field I met one of our brethren with a little dish in his

hand, seeking water. I did not know him at first, being covered with blood. He smiled, and said, 'Brother Haime, I have got a sore wound.' I asked, 'Have you got Christ in your heart?' He said, 'I have; and I have had him all this day. I have seen many good and glorious days, with much of God, but I never saw more of it than this day. Glory be to God for all his mercies!' Among the dead there was great plenty of watches, and of gold and silver. One asked, 'Will you not get something?' I answered, 'No: I have got Christ. I will have no plunder.'* *

Next to their own country, the sympathies of the brothers were awakened in behalf of Ireland, where Protestantism had fallen into a profound sleep, under the shade of the civil power; and Popery, ever watchful and active for the attainment of its own worldly and selfish ends, was rapidly leading the body of the population into superstition and sin. After visiting the principal counties in England, Mr. John Wesley went to Ireland, in the year 1747, as a Preacher of righteousness, where he met at once with formidable opposition, and encouraging success. He was immediately followed by his brother, who preached with equal zeal and power in several of the most important towns, unmoved by the Romish mobs, some of which seemed determined to shed his blood. Some of his escapes were all but miraculous. After patient perseverance, their object was gained. Preachers were stationed in several of the principal towns; Circuits and societies were formed; a standard was raised against the further encroachments of anti-christian error; many thousands of nominal Christians became the spiritual worshippers of God; and not a few of the deluded Romanists were not

* Lives of Early Methodist Preachers, vol. i. pp. 168, 169.

only taught to distinguish between the religion of Christ and the commandments of men, but believed in the Lord Jesus to the saving of the soul.

For several years Mr. Charles Wesley occasionally visited Ireland, where his energetic ministry was signally owned of God in the conversion of men. His brother was accustomed to visit it to the end of his life. Sometimes they were rudely treated by the populace, who were anxious to resist all religious and moral innovations, and perpetuate the existence of Popery and crime. Once Mr. Charles Wesley, with several of the Preachers, had the honour of being presented by the grand Jury of Cork as a "man of ill-fame, and a vagabond." Yet these venerable men found an ample reward in the good which was manifestly done through their instrumentality. An efficient native ministry was raised up; a distinct, though not an independent, religious Connexion was formed; so that the Irish Methodists had their own annual Conference, became a distinguished part of the Methodist body, and have had the gratification of presenting to the Wesleyan itinerancy some of its most able and useful Ministers. Among these may be mentioned the revered names of Thomas Walsh, William Myles, Walter Griffith, and Adam Clarke; to say nothing of several who are now alive, and are serving their generation, by the will of God, both at home and in the wide field of Missions.

Though the personal ministry of the Wesleys was confined to the United Kingdom, their influence soon extended to distant nations. Philip Embury, a Local Preacher from Ireland, having emigrated to America, settled in New-York, where he began to preach the truth of God. In the year 1766, he formed a society there, consisting doubtless of

persons who had been converted through his labours. They erected a chapel for their own accommodation, and that others also might stately hear the word of life. About the same time, Captain Webb, an officer in the British army, and a zealous Preacher, visited New-York and several other places, where the people wondered to see a man in military uniform, and bearing a sword, occupying the pulpit, and with great power and earnestness calling sinners to repentance. Many were deeply impressed under his word. Some time after Mr. Strawbridge, another Local Preacher from Ireland, settled in Maryland, where he pursued the same course as that which his brethren had adopted in New-York and its neighbourhood. He preached to the people with holy unction, formed a society, and, with the assistance of its members and of other well-disposed persons, built a log chapel for the public benefit. He was followed by Mr. Williams, who travelled largely through the country, spreading the Wesleyan publications wherever he went; and by Mr. John King, from England, who publicly enforced the truth which he had received. The unpretending labours of these devout men were crowned with success. Several were convinced of sin, and brought into Christian light and liberty; and some of the young converts, constrained by the love of Christ, began to teach others the nature and blessedness of true religion, and the way to attain it.

In the year 1769 we find the following entry in the Minutes of Conference:—"We have a pressing call from our brethren at New-York, (who have built a preaching-house,) to come over and help them. Who is willing to go? A. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor. Q. What can we

do further in token of our brotherly love? A. Let us now make a collection among ourselves. This was immediately done; and out of it fifty pounds were allotted towards the payment of their debt, and about twenty given to our brethren for their passage." This was in all probability the very first collection ever made among the Methodists for a directly Missionary purpose. It was raised in the Conference, and amounted to the goodly sum of seventy pounds, which was applied in the manner here specified. It is worthy of remark, that in the old chapel at Leeds the first Methodist Missionaries received their appointment, and the first Missionary collection was made; and that, after a lapse of more than forty years, the first Methodist Missionary Meeting was held under the same roof.

Messrs. Boardman and Pilmoor, with those who were in the field before them, went abroad in various directions preaching the word. Yet they were not able to meet the spiritual necessities of the people; so that in the Minutes of 1771 it is said, "Our brethren in America call aloud for help. Who are willing to go over and help them? A. Five were willing. The two appointed were Francis Asbury and Richard Wright." Within a few years they were followed by George Shadford, Thomas Rankin, Martin Rodda, and James Dempster; some of whom returned to England on the breaking out of the revolutionary war. Mr. Asbury found an asylum in the house of a powerful and influential friend; and the native Preachers pursued their evangelical labours with zeal and perseverance, unappalled by either local opposition or popular alarm. One of their number, Mr. Freeborn Garrettson, a man of a fine spirit, and of apostolic piety and zeal, says, "Amidst the clash

of war, God, in a glorious manner, prospered his work in awakening and converting thousands of souls; so that in process of time the peninsula became comparatively as the garden of the Lord. There was a blessed work among the African slaves; and in no part of my labours have I had more delightful seasons than I had in preaching to them." Thus "they went forth in the power of the Spirit, disseminating divine truth, and suffering much persecution, and many privations." *

While this work was in progress in America, Dr. Thomas Coke, a Clergyman of the Church of England, and a member of the University of Oxford, after holding for some time the curacy of South-Petherton, connected himself with Mr. Wesley, to serve him as a son in the Gospel. His union with the Methodist body was most seasonable and advantageous. Under the direction of Mr. Wesley, he took the superintendence of the foreign work; and for many years was such an example of Missionary zeal and enterprise as the Christian church has rarely seen. His services in connexion with the Methodist Missions were marked by an energy, disinterestedness, and perseverance which can never be forgotten; and in importance and success they were second only to those of the venerated man whom he owned as his father in the Lord.

On the cessation of the American war, and the acknowledgment of the independence of the United States, Mr. Wesley gave to his societies there the form and character of a Church, having in itself all the ordinances of Christianity. For this proceeding he was severely censured at the time; but the result has shown that he was guided by a sound dis-

* Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine, vol. i. pp. 675, 676.

cretion, and formed a just estimate of the religious necessities of that country. The measure has already been attended with the most important spiritual benefits to millions of people; and unborn generations will doubtless derive from it the highest advantages.

From the time at which this arrangement was carried into practical effect, the work of God in America prospered beyond all former example. Every where there was a rapid increase of native Preachers, who followed the scattered population through immense districts of country, not forgetting the African slaves; and outcasts, for whom no man had previously cared, were gathered into the church by thousands. "The wilderness and the solitary place" were literally "glad for" these itinerant evangelists; and the moral "desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose." "Thanksgiving and the voice of melody" were heard in the deep and lonely forest; and spiritual enjoyments, the effects of divine truth, and of that "great grace" which was upon them, every where cheered the people under all their privations and labour.

In no part of the world have the Wesleyan teaching and discipline been of more signal benefit than among the Negroes in the West-India islands, formerly a scene of the most cruel oppressions. Nathanael Gilbert, Esq., the Speaker of the House of Assembly in Antigua, coming to England for the recovery of his impaired health, was led to attend the ministry of Mr. Wesley, which he found to be the power of God to the salvation of his soul. Happy in the enjoyment of the divine favour, and full of holy zeal, he returned to Antigua in the year 1760. Regardless of popular opinion and prejudice, and

feeling that the bond and free are all one in Christ, he began to teach Christianity to the African slaves; many of whom, by the blessing of God upon his instrumentality, were made the Lord's free men. Nearly two hundred persons were united together in holy fellowship under his superintendence. These were his joy and crown, while profane men, enemies of religion, justice, and humanity, treated him with bitter hostility, for thus attempting to raise the Negro character, and arrest the progress of ungodliness and crime. While thus usefully and honourably employed, he was mysteriously called away by death; and the children of his pious exertions were left as sheep without a shepherd.

Yet the little flock were not finally forsaken. The dockyard at Antigua being in want of shipwrights, application was made to the Government at home for some suitable persons to be sent thither from England. Among the persons selected was John Baxter, of the royal dock at Chatham, who had been connected with the Methodist society about twelve years, and had also for some time been a Class-Leader and a Local Preacher. On his arrival he collected the remains of the society which had been formed by Mr. Gilbert; and writing to Mr. Wesley under the date of April 2d, 1778, he says, "The work that God began by Mr. Gilbert is still remaining. The black people have been kept together by two black women, who have continued praying and meeting with those who attended every night. I preached to about thirty on Saturday night; on Sunday morning to about the same number; and in the afternoon of the same day, to about four or five hundred. The old members desire that I would inform you, that you have many children in

Antigua, whom you never saw. I hope we shall have an interest in your prayers, and that our Christian brethren will pray for us." *

For about eight years this holy and indefatigable man continued his labours before the arrival of Missionaries to assist him. During this period he worked in the dockyard during the day, and in the evening and on Sundays taught Christianity to the people ; and with such success that about two thousand persons were united together in religious society. Such an example reminds us of St. Paul, who, when it was necessary, laboured with his own hands, that he might support himself, and those that were with him, while at the same time he was "making many rich" in spiritual knowledge and blessings.

The manner in which Mr. Baxter obtained help, and by means of which a permanent form was given to the West India Mission, was equally providential and unexpected. Dr. Coke had embarked in September, 1786, for Nova-Scotia, attended by three Missionaries, Messrs. Warrener, Hammet, and Clarke. Mr. Warrener was appointed to the West Indies by Mr. Wesley ; and it was designed that he should sail thither from North America. It was intended that the Doctor should fix the other two in the most necessitous and promising stations which might come under his notice. The voyage itself was most afflicting and calamitous ; but its results were happy beyond expression. The vessel, during the greater part of its attempt to reach the destined port, was exposed to tempests which threatened nothing less than destruction ; and at different times scarcely the slightest hope of preservation remained. The ship, having arrived on the banks of Newfoundland,

* Drew's Life of Dr. Coke, p. 166.

was already more than half a wreck ; the company on board were placed on a reduced allowance of water ; and as there was no probability of landing where they had intended, they resolved to alter their course and endeavour to reach the West Indies. Scarcely had they given a new direction to their movements, than, to use the Doctor's own expression, it seemed as if angels blew the gale, and they were carried directly to Antigua, where Mr. Baxter was labouring alone, and the Lord Jesus had merciful designs towards the neglected people. Here they safely landed on the morning of Christmas-day ; and on walking up the town of St. John, the Doctor met Mr. Baxter on his way to the chapel, for the purpose of conducting the worship of God, and of inviting the attention of the people to the advent of the Messiah. They were unknown to each other, except by reputation ; but when their names were announced, they embraced each other with a strength of affection, and a feeling of joyous surprise, which can be more readily conceived than expressed. On that memorable day the Doctor twice occupied Mr. Baxter's pulpit, and also administered the Lord's supper to the people. During his stay in the West Indies, which continued about six weeks, the Doctor was received with the utmost cordiality. He was once invited to a public dinner, at which the Duke of Clarence, afterwards William the Fourth, was present ; and had the offer of a salary of five hundred pounds per annum, if he would remain in Antigua. But, like his revered father in the Gospel, he was too intent upon the spread of Christ's religion in the world to confine his labours to any one place. He visited several of the islands, that he might know from actual inspection the openings which they presented for Missionary

labour; and having fixed Mr. Warrener at Antigua, Mr. Clarke at St. Vincent's, and Mr. Hammet at St. Christopher's, he sailed for the American continent. From this time the Wesleyan Mission in the West Indies was carried on with increasing success. It had obtained too deep a hold upon the heart of Dr. Coke, to be ever either forgotten or neglected. The Mission begun under these circumstances, has been a means of salvation to many thousands of redeemed men; and, with the faithful co-operation of other bodies of Christians, it has given freedom in those beautiful colonies to nearly a million of human beings, once the most oppressed and degraded of their race. For it is not conceivable that West-India slavery would at this day have been extinct, had it not been for the Christian training which many of the Negroes received, and for the publicity which the Christian Missions gave to their oppressions and wrongs. A sceptic may perhaps doubt whether there was anything peculiar in the successive storms which drove Dr. Coke and his fellow-Missionaries so widely out of their course; but the man who seriously believes his Bible can scarcely forbear to say, "This was the finger of God!" Little did Dr. Coke, and the three devoted men who sailed with him, imagine, during their perilous voyage, that they were destined to lay the foundation of a work in the West Indies, which, in the comparatively short period of fifty years, should accomplish the extinction of slavery. To teach the slaves contentment, and conduct them to a world where the voice of the oppressor is never heard, were the only objects for which they even dared to hope.

The anticipated mission to the British provinces of North America was not forgotten, though it was not

begun by the men whom Mr. Wesley and Dr. Coke had intended for that service. In Nova-Scotia, Mr. Black, an emigrant from England, having obtained the blessing of personal acceptance with God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, began to recommend to others what he himself had found. He was soon after assisted and encouraged in his work by a visit from Freeborn Garrettson. A Mission was also commenced about the same time in Newfoundland, by Mr. John M'Geary; so that before Mr. Wesley went to his reward, besides the Methodist Church in the United States, nineteen Missionaries were employed under his direction in the West Indies, and in British North America.

As he advanced in life, he contemplated the success of this great work, both at home and abroad, with increasing delight and gratitude. In the year 1777 he laid the foundation of a new chapel in the City-road, London, to be used instead of the Foundery, which he and his fellow-labourers had occupied from the beginning. On this occasion he preached and published a sermon, in which he makes the following remarks:—"Methodism, so called, is the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive Church, the religion of the Church of England. This old religion is no other than love, the love of God, and of all mankind; the loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved us,—as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth, as our own soul. This love is the great medicine of life; the never-failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world; for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in

hand ; there is humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering, the whole image of God ; and, at the same time, a peace that passeth all understanding, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. This religion of love, and joy, and peace, has its seat in the inmost soul ; but is ever showing itself by its fruits, continually springing up, not only in all innocence, (for love worketh no ill to his neighbour,) but likewise in every kind of beneficence, spreading virtue and happiness all around it.

“ Just at the time when we wanted little of filling up the measure of our iniquities, two or three Clergymen of the Church of England began vehemently to call sinners to repentance. Many thousands gathered together to hear them ; and in every place where they came, many began to show such a concern for religion as they never had done before. Many were in a short time deeply convinced of the number and heinousness of their sins, of their evil tempers, of their inability to help themselves, and of the insignificancy of their outside religion. And from this repentance sprung fruits meet for repentance. The whole form of their life was changed. They ceased to do evil, and learned to do well. Neither was this all ; but, over and above this outward change, they began to experience inward religion. The love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, which they enjoy to this day. They love him, because he first loved us ; and this love constrains them to love all mankind, and inspires them with every holy and heavenly temper, with the mind which was in Christ. Hence it is that they are now uniform in their behaviour, unblamable in all manner of conversation ; and in whatsoever state they are, they have learned therewith to be content.

Thus they calmly travel on through life, never re-pining, or murmuring, or dissatisfied, till the hour comes that they shall drop this covering of earth, and return to the Father of spirits.

“This revival of religion has spread to such a degree as neither we nor our fathers had known. How *extensive* has it been! There is scarce a considerable town in the kingdom, where some have not been made witnesses of it. It has spread to every age and sex, to most orders and degrees of men; and even to abundance of those who, in time past, were accounted monsters of wickedness.

“Consider the *swiftness* as well as the extent of it. In what age has such a number of sinners been recovered, in so short a time, from the error of their ways? When has true religion, I will not say since the Reformation, but since the time of Constantine the Great, made so large a progress in any nation, within so small a space? I believe, hardly can ancient or modern history afford a parallel instance.

“We may likewise observe the *depth* of the work so extensively and swiftly wrought. Multitudes have been thoroughly convinced of sin; and, shortly after, so filled with joy and love, that, whether they were in the body, or out of the body, they could hardly tell; and in the power of this love they have trampled under foot whatever the world accounts either terrible or desirable, having evidenced, in the severest trials, an invariable and tender good-will to mankind, and all the fruits of holiness. Now, so deep a repentance, so strong a faith, so fervent a love, so unblemished holiness, wrought in so many persons in so short a time, the world has not seen for many ages.” *

As Mr. Wesley declined into the vale of years

* Works, vol. vii. pp. 423—427,

the perpetuity of that system of doctrine and discipline, which had been so signally owned of God in the conversion and salvation of men, became a matter of anxious concern both to himself and his people. The appointment of the Preachers to the various chapels, and to the consequent pastoral charge of the societies, presented the greatest difficulty. It had been agreed that, after the death of the two brothers, the power to station the Preachers should be vested in the Conference; and hence arose the inquiry, "Who constitute the Conference?" the men who had hitherto borne that name being simply such Preachers as Mr. Wesley had personally invited to meet him once a year, to aid him with their advice, as to the most effectual means of carrying on the work of God. The Preachers felt the importance of the case, and requested Mr. Wesley to consider what could be done in this emergency; so that, in the event of his death, the Connexion might not be dissolved. He took legal advice, and drew up the "Deed of Declaration," constituting one hundred Preachers by name, "the Conference of the people called Methodists;" at the same time defining their powers, and making provision for the filling up of all vacancies occasioned by death, superannuation, or expulsion. This Deed he caused to be enrolled in His Majesty's High Court of Chancery, in the year 1784. It created some uneasiness at the time, particularly among the Preachers whose names were omitted; but that uneasiness soon passed away; and the Deed has unquestionably been the greatest benefit of the kind ever conferred upon the Connexion. From the time of Mr. Wesley's death, it has been strictly acted upon by the Conference, and has preserved the unity of the body, by securing to

the congregations and societies that itinerant ministry, for the exercise of which every Methodist chapel was originally built.

With respect to this document. Mr. Wesley says, "Without some authentic deed, fixing the meaning of the term, the moment I died the Conference had been nothing. Therefore any of the proprietors of the land on which our preaching-houses were built, might have seized them for their own use; and there would have been none to hinder them; for the Conference would have been nobody, a mere empty name.

"You see, then, in all the pains I have taken about this necessary deed, I have been labouring, not for myself, (I have no interest therein,) but for the whole body of Methodists; in order to fix them upon such a foundation as is likely to stand as long as the sun and moon endure. That is, if they continue to walk by faith, and show forth their faith by their works; otherwise I pray God to root out the memorial of them from the earth." *

The maintenance of the Conference in the full possession and exercise of the power with which he invested it, Mr. Wesley believed to be the only means of effectually preserving the unity and purity of the body; and of this every one must be convinced who duly considers the subject. The Conference was not entrusted with those powers for its own sake, as has sometimes been insinuated, but for the benefit of the Connexion in all its departments. It is the centre of union to the body, and can have no interests separate from those of the societies. Its government is strictly paternal.

* Works, vol. xiii. p. 217.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEATH OF THE TWO WESLEYS, AND OF THEIR
PRINCIPAL CLERICAL FRIENDS.

MR. WESLEY was spared to a very advanced period of life; so that he superintended the itinerant ministry and the societies which he had formed, till both had acquired an encouraging degree of stability. He survived all the clerical friends with whom he had been early connected in the work of God. Among these was the Rev. James Hervey, Rector of Weston-Favell, in Northamptonshire. He was a member of the Methodist society in Oxford, being a Commoner of Lincoln College when Mr. Wesley was a Fellow. During his residence at the University he was under great obligations to Mr. Wesley, who taught him Hebrew, and showed him other marks of especial kindness; which led him, on Mr. Wesley's departure to Georgia, to say, "My father, shall I call you, or my friend? for indeed you have been both to me."* He was a man of unquestionable piety, and very exemplary in the discharge of clerical duties in his parish. His writings, though disfigured by an artificial and inflated style, have been very useful, particularly in leading devout people to connect the love of nature and admiration of the works of God with evangelical sentiment. Having embraced the scheme of absolute predestination, he was induced, towards the close of life, to write against Mr. Wesley; but on his death-bed he

* Arminian Magazine, vol. i. p. 131.

directed the unfinished manuscript to be destroyed. It was, however, by Mr. Hervey's brother, placed in the hands of William Cudworth, a man of antinomian principles, who had separated from Mr. Whitefield. By him it was understood to be largely interpolated; so that when it was published, it was found to contain bitter and cruel sarcasms and reflections upon Mr. Wesley, which, there is reason to believe, never emanated from the alleged author, who was now no more. Mr. Wesley deeply felt this act of injustice. In Mr. Hervey's name, he was charged with such a want of common honesty, that even Turks, Deists, and Atheists would disown him. He defended himself in the spirit of Christian meekness, and with his accustomed acumen, and force of argument. The following is his emphatic conclusion "And is this thy voice, my son David? Is this thy tender, loving, grateful spirit? No. The hand of Joab is in all this! I acknowledge the hand, the heart of William Cudworth. I perceive it was not an empty boast, (as I was at first inclined to think,) which he uttered to Mr. Pearse, at Bury, before my friend went to paradise,—'Mr. Hervey has given me full power to put out and *put in* what I please.'

"But he, too, is gone hence; and he knows now whether I am an honest man or no. It cannot be long, even in the course of nature, before I shall follow him.

'My race of glory's run, and race of shame;
And I shall shortly be with them that rest.'

I could wish, till then, to be at peace with all men; but the will of the Lord be done! Peace or war, ease or pain, life or death is good, so I may but 'finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I

have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.' " * Mr. Hervey died on Christmas-day, 1758.

One of the most remarkable of Mr. Wesley's clerical friends and fellow-labourers was Mr. Grimshaw, of Haworth, in the West of Yorkshire; a man of apostolic simplicity and zeal. For three years he had continued under a distressing conviction of his guilt and danger, when one day, in the year 1742, being in the utmost agony of mind, there was clearly represented to his believing view the Lord Jesus Christ pleading with God the Father in his behalf, and obtaining for him a free pardon. "I was now," says he, "willing to renounce myself, and to embrace Christ for my all in all. O what life and comfort did I enjoy in my own soul! and what a taste of the pardoning love of God!"

After this "his lively manner of representing the truths of God could not fail of being much talked of, and bringing many hundreds out of curiosity to Haworth church; who received so much benefit by what they heard, that, when the novelty was long over, the church continued to be full of people, many of whom came from far, and this for twenty years together.

"For fifteen years or upwards he used to preach every week, fifteen, twenty, and sometimes thirty times, besides visiting the sick, and other occasional duties. In sixteen years he was only once suspended from his labour by sickness; though he dared all weathers upon the bleak mountains, and used his body with less compassion than a merciful man would use his beast. His soul at various times enjoyed large manifestations of God's love; and he drank

* Wesley's Works, vol. x. p. 346.

deep into his Spirit." * His salutary influence was felt through an extensive tract of country; and his memory is still affectionately cherished by thousands of people, the descendants of those who were saved through his instrumentality. He died in peace and holy triumph on the 7th of April, 1762, in the fifty-fifth year of his age, and the twenty-first of his eminent usefulness. For some years he superintended the Circuit in which his parish was included, and most faithfully and affectionately co-operated with the Methodist Preachers who were stationed in that part of Yorkshire.

The next of Mr. Wesley's clerical friends who was called away was the Rev. George Whitefield, who died in America, September 30, 1770, in the midst of his extraordinary labours and usefulness. He belonged to the original society of Methodists in Oxford, and cherished from early life a permanent affection for the Wesleys, as they also did for him. They submitted together to the austere discipline which Mr. Law recommended, knowing at that time no other Gospel; but afterwards, having obtained more just and adequate views of Christianity, they all began at the same time to preach the doctrine of present salvation from sin by faith in the Lord Jesus. It was in compliance with Mr. Whitefield's solicitation, and by the force of his example, that they became field Preachers in England. For a season these men of God were as "a three-fold cord, which is not easily broken," labouring together with a perfect oneness of heart and mind, till Mr. Whitefield began to preach the tenet of absolute predestination, when a separation became unavoidable. The Wesleys would have continued in union with him, but

* Wesley's Works, vol. iii. pp. 84-86.

Mr. Whitefield's friends would hear of no accommodation with men who "were in so dangerous errors."* Mr. Whitefield thought that his brethren the Wesleys, on their admission into the heavenly paradise, would "blush" to think that they had ever doubted of God's "electing love," in the Calvinian sense; they thought that he would "blush" for having doubted whether Christ died for the whole human race; and having in vain attempted to convince each other, they mutually "agreed to differ." From this time Mr. Whitefield pursued an independent course, while the brothers remained one in judgment and effort. Yet on both sides a spirit of sincere respect was cherished. They loved each other for the sake of their common Lord; and esteemed each other highly for their work's sake.

As an author, Mr. Whitefield never excelled. His writings want depth, originality, and compression. He is diffuse and feeble. But as a Preacher, he was perhaps never surpassed in the qualities which are adapted to produce effect upon mixed multitudes. His voice, his action, his pleading importunity were absolutely irresistible; and the deep emotions of the tens of thousands of people, who hung upon his lips as he travelled through Great Britain and America, attested the power of his eloquence. People of every character and grade were affected by the mighty unction which attended his ministry. Like the two Wesleys, he dwelt particularly upon the first principles of revealed truth; insisting continually upon repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, as indispensably and universally necessary in order to justification, holiness, and admission into heaven. The

* Wesley's Works, vol. viii. p. 349.

one design of his ministry was to turn men from the world and sin to Christ. Mr. Wesley preached the funeral sermon of his friend, and bore willing testimony to his holy zeal, perseverance, indefatigable labours, and public usefulness. The difference of their creeds could not so far influence the minds of these great and good men as to induce a denial of each other's piety and uprightness.

Mr. Whitefield's letter to Mr. Wesley, dated December 3d, 1753, and written when Mr. Wesley was supposed to be near death, is such an effusion of Christian affection as must for ever endear his memory to good men.

“BRISTOL, *December 3d, 1753.*

“REV. AND VERY DEAR SIR,

“IF seeing you so weak when leaving London distressed me, the news and prospect of your approaching dissolution hath quite weighed me down. I pity myself and the church, but not you. A radiant throne awaits you; and ere long you will enter into your Master's joy. Yonder he stands, with a massy crown, ready to put it on your head, amidst the admiring throng of saints and angels: but I, poor I, that have been waiting for my dissolution these nineteen years, must be left behind, to grovel here below! Well! this is my comfort: It cannot be long ere the chariots will be sent even for worthless me. If prayers can detain you, even you, Rev. and dear Sir, shall not leave us yet: but if the decree is gone forth, that you must fall asleep in Jesus, may he kiss your soul away, and give you to die in the embraces of triumphant love! If in the land of the dying, I hope to pay my last respects to you next week. If not, Rev. and dear Sir, F-a-r-e-w-e-l-l. My heart is too big, tears trickle down too fast, and

you, I fear, too weak, for me to enlarge. Underneath you may there be Christ's everlasting arms! I commend you to his never-failing mercy, and am, Rev. and very dear Sir,

“Your most affectionate, sympathizing, and afflicted younger brother in the Gospel of our common Lord,

“G. WHITEFIELD.”

In the year 1785 Mr. Wesley lost two of the most dear and valued of all his earthly friends: the Rev. Vincent Perronet, Vicar of Shoreham, in Kent; and the Rev. John Fletcher, Vicar of Madeley. Soon after he had begun to preach the doctrine of salvation by faith, his acquaintance with Mr. Perronet commenced; and their friendship was most intimate and confidential. It is observable, from Mr. Wesley's Journal, that whenever he was in perplexity and trouble he almost invariably visited Shoreham, to consult the venerable Vicar of that village; so that Mr. Charles Wesley used to call this holy man, “the Archbishop of the Methodists.” Two of his sons became Travelling Preachers in Mr. Wesley's Connexion.

On Saturday, May 7th, says Mr. Wesley, “that venerable saint, Mr. Perronet, desired his granddaughter, Miss Briggs, who attended him day and night, to go out into the garden, and take a little air. He was reading, and hearing her read, the three last chapters of Isaiah. When she returned he was in a kind of ecstasy; the tears running down his cheeks, from a deep sense of the glorious things which were shortly to come to pass. He continued unspeakably happy that day, and on Sunday was, if possible, happier still. And indeed heaven seemed to be, as it were,

opened to all that were round about him. When he was in bed, she went into his room, to see if any thing was wanting; and as she stood at the feet of the bed, he smiled, and broke out, 'God bless thee, my dear child, and all that belong to thee! Yea, he *will* bless thee!' which he earnestly repeated many times, till she left the room. When she went in the next morning, Monday, the 9th, his spirit was returned to God!

"So ended the holy and happy life of Mr. Vincent Perronet, in the ninety-second year of his age. I follow hard after him in years, being now in the eighty-second year of my age. O that I may follow him in holiness; and that my last end may be like his!" *

Mr. Fletcher was one of the holiest men that ever lived. He was a native of Switzerland; but having come to England, he was made a partaker of the Christian salvation through the instrumentality of the Methodists, and to the last continued in intimate connexion with them. He maintained an inviolable attachment to Mr. Wesley, whose theological views he defended with consummate ability, meekness, and charity, in a long and arduous controversy, in which his success was unquestionable. Next to Mr. Wesley, he was the ablest advocate of the Methodist tenets; and no man ever adorned them by a purer life, or a more burning, active love. His end fully corresponded with his deep and fervent piety. When laid on the bed of death, he told Mrs. Fletcher that he had received such a manifestation of the full meaning of those words, "God is love," as he could never be able to tell. "It fills me," said he, "every moment. O Polly, my dear Polly, God is love!

* Works, vol. iv. pp. 305, 306.

Shout, shout aloud ! I want a gust of praise to go to the ends of the earth !” The servant coming in, he cried out, “ O Sally, God is love ! Shout, both of you. I want to hear you shout his praise !”

He had always delighted much in these lines,—

“ Jesu’s blood, through earth and skies,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy ! cries ; ”

and whenever Mrs. Fletcher repeated them, he would answer, “ Boundless, boundless, boundless !” and when articulation had become extremely difficult, he exclaimed,

“ Mercy’s full power I soon shall prove,
Loved with an everlasting love ! ”

“ I was intimately acquainted with him,” says Mr. Wesley, “ for above twenty years ; I conversed with him morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a journey of many hundred miles ; and in all that time I never heard him speak one improper word, nor saw him do an improper action. Many exemplary men have I known, holy in heart and life, within fourscore years ; but one equal to him I have not known,—one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God. So unblamable a character in every respect I have not found either in Europe or America ; and I scarce expect to find another such on this side of eternity.” *

Three years after the death of Mr. Fletcher, Mr. John Wesley sustained the loss of his brother Charles, to whom he had been united through life by a strong and tender affection. They began their religious career together at Oxford ; they endured the same hardships and reproach in Georgia ; they

* Works, vol. vii. pp. 444, 445, 448.

obtained the Christian salvation, through faith in the Lord Jesus, within three days of each other, in the year 1738: they had both travelled through England and Ireland, calling sinners to repentance in the open air, and meekly enduring every form of calumny and danger; and they had embodied the same evangelical doctrines in various imperishable publications,—John in sterling prose, and Charles in equally sterling verse.

Dr. Whitehead says, that “Mr. Charles Wesley had a weak body, and a poor state of health, during the greatest part of his life I believe he laid the foundation of both at Oxford, by too close application to study, and abstinence from food. He rode much on horseback, which probably contributed to lengthen out life to a good old age. I visited him several times in his last sickness; and his body was indeed reduced to the most extreme state of weakness. He possessed that state of mind which he had always been most pleased to see in others,—unaffected humility, and holy resignation to the will of God. He had no transports of joy, but solid hope, and unshaken confidence in Christ, which kept his mind in perfect peace.”

From the time of his conversion he had been accustomed to think in verse; and the habit remained with him till his spirit returned to God. A few days before his death, having been silent for some time, he called Mrs. Wesley to him, and requested her to write at his dictation; when he feebly articulated the following lines:—

“ IN age and feebleness extreme,
Who shall a sinful worm redeem?
Jesus, my only hope thou art,
Strength of my failing flesh and heart;

O could I catch a smile from thee,
And drop into eternity ! ”

He died on the 29th of March, 1788, aged seventy-nine years, and at his own desire was buried in Mary-le-bone churchyard. The pall was supported by eight Clergymen. On his tombstone are the following lines, written by himself on the death of one of his friends :—

“ WITH poverty of spirit bless'd,
Rest, happy saint, in Jesus rest ;
A sinner saved, through grace forgiven,
Redeem'd from earth to reign in heaven !
Thy labours of unwearied love,
By thee forgot, are crown'd above ;
Crown'd, through the mercy of thy Lord,
With a free, full, immense reward ! ”

Mr. Charles Wesley could not have written the sermons, appeals, and controversial tracts which bear the name of John, nor could he have organized the societies, and then preserved them and the Preachers in Christian order for half a century ; but for many years his ministry was signally powerful and efficient ; and his hymns are a richer bequest to the Christian church in Great Britain and America than language can express. In this respect never was man more honoured of God. How often the Holy Spirit will make these sacred compositions a means of quickening the devotions of individual believers, and of worshipping assemblies, will be known only in the day of the Lord.

As a man, he possessed a truly noble and generous spirit. In his friendships he was cordial, firm, and affectionate ; and was greatly beloved and admired by those who were intimate with him. The following hymn, which he appended to the first

edition of his brother's sermon on the "Catholic Spirit," shows him to have been "a lover of good men" in general, without distinction of sect;—

CATHOLIC LOVE.

WEARY of all this wordy strife,
 These notions, forms, and modes, and names,
 To thee, the Way, the Truth, the Life,
 Whose love my simple heart inflames,
 Divinely taught, at last I fly,
 With thee and thine to live and die.

Forth from the midst of Babel brought,
 Parties and sects I cast behind,
 Enlarged my heart, and free my thought,
 Where'er the latent truth I find,
 The latent truth with joy to own,
 And bow to Jesu's name alone.

Redeem'd by thine almighty grace,
 I taste my glorious liberty,
 With open arms the world embrace,
 And *cleave* to those who cleave to thee ;
 But only in thy saints *delight*,
 Who walk with God in purest white.

One with the little flock I rest,
 The members sound who hold the Head ;
 The chosen few with pardon blest,
 And by the' anointing Spirit led
 Into the mind that was in thee,
 Into the depths of Deity.

My brethren, friends, and kinsmen, these,
 Who do my heavenly Father's will ;
 Who aim at perfect holiness,
 And all thy counsels to fulfil ;
 Athirst to be whate'er thou art,
 And love their God with all their heart.

From these, howe'er in flesh disjoin'd,
 Where'er dispersed o'er earth abroad,
 Unfeign'd, unbounded love I find,
 And constant as the life of God :

Fountain of life, from thence it sprung,
As pure, as even. and as strong.

Join'd to the hidden church unknown,
In this sure bond of perfectness,
Obscurely safe I dwell alone,
And glory in the' uniting grace,
To me, to each believer given,
To all thy saints in earth and heaven.

C. W.

In the obituary of the Preachers, and in answer to the question, "Who have died this year?" his brother says, "Mr. Charles Wesley, who, after spending fourscore years with much sorrow and pain, quietly retired to Abraham's bosom. He had no disease; but after a gradual decay of some months,

'The weary wheels of life stood still at last.'

"His least praise was his talent for poetry; although Dr. Watts did not scruple to say, that 'that single poem, Wrestling Jacob, was worth all the verses he himself had written.'"^{*}

The time now drew near when Mr. John Wesley himself must also die. To the last he pursued his plans of usefulness with the same diligence and constancy which had marked his course from the beginning; and his holy gratitude and cheerfulness remained unabated. In March, 1785, he thus speaks of the revival of religion, in which he had acted so very 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;

^{*} Minutes of Conference, vol. i. p. 201.

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." *

The following verses, which he inserted in the Hymn Book for general use about eleven years before his death, very correctly express the predominant feeling of his heart at this period of his life:—

- “O the goodness of God, Employing a clod
His tribute of glory to raise!
His standard to bear, And with triumph declare
His unspeakable riches of grace!
- “O the fathomless love, That has deign'd to approve
And prosper the work of my hands!
With my pastoral crook I went over the brook,
And behold I am spread into bands!
- “Who, I ask in amaze, Hath begotten me these?
And inquire from what quarter they came?
My full heart it replies, They are born from the skies
And gives glory to God and the Lamb.
- “All honour and praise To the Father of grace,
To the Spirit and Son I return,
The business pursue He hath given me to do,
And rejoice that I ever was born.
- “In a rapture of joy My life I employ,
The God of my life to proclaim;
'T is worth living for this, To administer bliss,
And salvation in Jesus's name.
- “My remnant of days I spend in his praise,
Who died the whole world to redeem;
Be they many or few, My days are his due,
And they all are devoted to him.”

* Works, vol. iv. p. 298.

At this period the highest respect was paid to him by almost all classes of people. The churches in London were generally closed against him in the year 1738; and now he had more applications to preach in those very churches, for the benefit of public charities, than he could possibly comply with. His visits to many places in the country created a sort of general festival. The people crowded around him as he passed along the streets; the windows were filled with eager gazers; and the children waited "to catch the good man's smile," which the overflowing benignity of his heart rendered him ever willing to bestow. 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 17th 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." *

The purity of his life, connected with his incessant labours for the spiritual benefit of mankind, commanded admiration in quarters where a contrary feeling might have been expected to prevail. At the house of his faithful friend, Mr. Ebenezer Blackwell, of Lewisham, he once met Dr. Lowth, the accomplished Bishop of London, whose brother, a Clergyman in the west of England, had married

* Works, vol. iv. p. 468.

into Mr. Blackwell's family. The Bishop refused to sit above Mr. Wesley at table ; and feelingly said, " Mr. Wesley, may I be found at your feet in another world ! " Mr. Wesley, however, as might be expected, manifested strong signs of uneasiness at the thought of taking precedence of the learned Prelate ; when his Lordship obviated the difficulty, by requesting, as a favour, that he might sit below Mr. Wesley, alleging, that his hearing on one side was defective, and he did not wish to lose one word of Mr. Wesley's conversation.

January 1st, 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." *

Thus he was found when the great Master called. He continued in his work till the latter end of 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 2d of March, in great peace. When the hand of death was upon him, he oftener than once repeated, and that with solemn emphasis, the 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 !*

* Works, vol. iv. p. 478.

A few more of his dying sayings must be acceptable to the serious reader. Three days before he died, referring to an illness which he had in Bristol in the year 1783, he says, "My words then were,

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

One said, "Is this the present language of your heart? and do you feel as you then did?" He replied, "Yes." When the same person repeated,—

“ Bold I approach the’ eternal throne,
And claim the crown through Christ my own ;”

and then added, "It is enough: He, our precious Emmanuel, has purchased, has promised all;" he earnestly replied, "He is all! He is all!"

In the evening of the same day, while sitting in his chair, he said, "How necessary it is for every one to be on the right foundation!

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

We must be justified by faith; and then go on to perfection."

On the next day he said, "There is no way into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus;" and, referring to the text, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich," he emphatically said, "That is the foundation, the only foundation; and there is no other." He also repeated, three or four times in the space of a few hours, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

On the day before his death, after a very restless night, he began to sing,—

“ALL glory to God in the sky,
 And peace upon earth be restored;
 O Jesus, exalted on high,
 Appear our omnipotent Lord!
 Who, meanly in Bethlehem born,
 Didst stoop to redeem a lost race,
 Once more to thy creatures return,
 And reign in thy kingdom of grace.

“O wouldst thou again be made known,
 Again in thy Spirit descend,
 And set up in each of thine own
 A kingdom that never shall end!
 Thou only art able to bless,
 And make the glad nations obey,
 And bid the dire enmity cease,
 And bow the whole world to thy sway.”

Here his strength failed; but, after lying still awhile, he called for pen and ink. They were brought to him; but his hand, which had been a means of conveying comfort and instruction to thousands, could no longer perform its office. “Tell me,” said one, “what you would say.” “Nothing,” answered he, “but, *that God is with us.*” In a little while he broke out in a manner which, considering his extreme weakness, astonished all present, in these words,—

“I’ll praise my Maker while I’ve breath;
 And when my voice is lost in death,
 Praise shall employ my nobler powers:
 My days of praise shall ne’er be past
 While life, and thought, and being last,
 Or immortality endures.

“Happy the man whose hopes rely
 On Israel’s God; he made the sky,
 And earth and seas with all their train;
 His truth for ever stands secure;
 He saves the’ oppress’d, he feeds the poor,
 And none shall find his promise vain.”

During the same day, when he appeared to change for death, he said, with a weak voice, "Lord, thou givest strength to those that can speak, and to those that cannot. Speak, Lord, to all our hearts, and let them know that thou loosest the tongue." He then sang,

" To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Who sweetly all agree ;"

when his voice again failed.

Several friends being in the house, they were called into his room, and all kneeled down to prayer ; when his fervour of spirit was manifest to all present. In particular parts of the prayer his whole soul was engaged in such a manner as evidently showed how ardently he longed for the accomplishment of their united desires. When Mr. Broadbent prayed that if God were about to take away their father to his eternal rest, he would continue and increase his blessing upon the doctrine and discipline which he had long made his aged servant a means of propagating and establishing in the world ; an unusual degree of earnestness accompanied the loud *Amen* of the dying patriarch and saint. When they rose from their knees he took hold of their hands, kindly saluted them, and said, " Farewell, farewell !"

Some time after he strove to speak ; but finding that the friends who were present could not understand him, he paused a little, and then with all his remaining strength cried out, *The best of all is, God is with us.* Lifting 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.*

When his parched lips were wetted he devoutly repeated his usual thanksgiving after meat :—" We

thank thee, O Lord, for these and all thy mercies. Bless the Church and King; and grant us truth and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord, for ever and ever."

In the course of the same day, at different times, he 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-trying 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.

His will contains the following characteristic item:—"I give six pounds to be divided among the six poor men who shall carry my body to the grave: for I particularly desire there may be no hearse, no coach, no escutcheon, no pomp, except the tears of them that loved me, and are following me to Abraham's bosom. I solemnly adjure my executors, in the name of God, punctually to observe this."

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 direction, 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, "Forasmuch as it hath 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. When the funeral sermon was preached, the men occupied one side of the City-road chapel, and the women the other; and, with one solitary exception, it is said that not a coloured riband was to be seen in the vast congregation. One lady with a blue riband on her beaver hat found her way into the gallery; and on observing her singularity, she instantly tore the unseemly ornament from her head, and thus assumed the garb of mourning with the rest of the people.

Fully to exhibit the character of this man of God would require an ample volume. His attainments as a scholar, had he possessed no other distinction, would alone have entitled him to high respect. He was a critic in the Greek language; and he both spoke and wrote Latin with remarkable fluency and correctness to the end of his life. At the University he studied Hebrew and Arabic. In Georgia he conducted public worship both in French and Italian; and he offered to render the same service, in their own tongue, to a regiment of Germans at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, during the rebellion of 1745. His skill in logic was proverbial, and must strike every one who reads either his practical or his controversial works. They present finer examples, illustrative of the principles of this most useful art, than those of almost any other of our English authors. His correct and elegant literary taste, his readiness of appre-

hension, his ability to comprehend and simplify the most abstruse and complex subjects, are manifest in the whole of his voluminous writings. There are many passages in his works which, for depth and justness of expression, and strength and beauty of conception, would not suffer from a comparison with the most admired selections that the English language can furnish.

He was truly a lover of mankind. Some of the nobility and gentry honoured him with their friendship; and he availed himself of the opportunity thus afforded, for reminding them of the temptations and dangers of wealth, and the responsibility which it involves, as well as of the substantial good which is to be found in the possession of deep personal godliness.

The privations of the poor excited his tenderest sympathy, and he put forth every effort to relieve them. At the beginning of winter, it was his practice, in London, to raise a fund for the purpose of meeting the wants of the necessitous. This he did by going from door to door among the rich and liberal, to whom he could gain access; and in the distribution of food and clothing among the pious who were in want, he felt a greater satisfaction than "victors in a triumph know." Almost daily was he found by the beds of the afflicted; and his charity was only limited by his income. To God and the poor he gave all that he possessed. The following affecting record, written with a tremulous hand, only a few months before his decease, closes his book of private accounts:—

"N. B. For upwards of eighty-six years I have kept my accounts exactly. I will not attempt it any longer, being satisfied with the continual conviction,

that I save all I can, and give all I can ; that is, all I have.

“JOHN WESLEY.”

“*July 16th, 1790.*”

For nothing was he more remarkable than his love to children. Often did he lay his hands upon them, and bless them in the name of his great Master. He was in the habit of selecting small silver coins of peculiar freshness, and of presenting them to the children of his friends, as memorials of his affection.

In the improvement of time he was, perhaps, never exceeded. Through the greater part of his life he rose at four o'clock in the morning ; and every moment of his waking hours was devoted to some useful object. Admirably did he exemplify his own rule, intended for the guidance of his Preachers :— “Never be unemployed : never be triflingly employed, never while away time.” “If any one,” says he, “desires to know exactly what quantity of sleep his own constitution requires, he may very easily make the experiment which I made about sixty years ago. I then waked every night about twelve or one, and lay awake for some time. I readily concluded, that this arose from my lying longer in bed than nature required. To be satisfied, I procured an alarum, which waked me the next morning at seven ; (near an hour earlier than I rose the day before ;) yet I lay awake again at night. The second morning I rose at six ; but, notwithstanding this, I lay awake the second night. The third morning I rose at five ; but, nevertheless, I lay awake the third night. The fourth morning I rose at four ; (as, by the grace of God, I have done ever since ;) and I lay awake no more.”*

* Works, vol. vii. p. 69.

His knowledge was comprehensive, and his conversational powers of a high order. Dr. Samuel Johnson, an unexceptionable judge, who knew him intimately, said, "He talks well on every subject."

His meekness in controversy was as remarkable as that with which he endured the rude treatment of vulgar and profane mobs. In two or three instances he rebukes his opponents "sharply," according to the apostolic admonition; but it was only in the case of men who treated him with every species of low abuse and insult, notwithstanding their inferiority to him in every thing but worldly property. He never attempted to make his opponents appear ridiculous. Specimens of defective scholarship which he detected in their writings, the public exposure of which he knew would wound their feelings, it appears to have been his practice to communicate to them privately; and for this he received the acknowledgments of Bishop Gibson, Dr. Church, and Dr. Taylor, as he himself has distinctly stated.* He also informed the late Dr. Adam Clarke, that he received the thanks of Bishop Warburton on the same account, haughty and dogmatical as that distinguished Prelate was.

The power which he possessed over the Preachers and the societies was often a subject of remark during his life, and it has created surprise since his death. It was a power which he never sought, and which he never abused. He received it as involving great responsibility, and made it his constant business to use it for the advancement of the work of God. The government which he exercised was truly paternal; and both the Preachers and societies felt it to be a blessing. His was no crooked and sinuous

* Works, vol. x. p. 376.

policy, but a straightforward, upright, and Christian course, without selfishness, and without guile.

But it is with reference to that revival of religion, of which he was the chief instrument, that his character will ever be principally considered. He deviated from the order of the Church to which he belonged; but only so far as he believed himself providentially called, and in those things where he felt that, in his case, the opposite conduct would be a sin. He saw impiety and wickedness every where prevalent; and he lifted up his warning voice, calling the people to repentance, that so iniquity might not be their ruin. He learned from his own experience, as well as from the Bible, that peace of conscience and purity of heart are attainable only through faith in Jesus Christ; and he proclaimed a full and present salvation to all who would thus accept it as the free gift of God. The consequence was, that awakened multitudes asked his spiritual advice, and begged of him to take them under his pastoral care. Hence the formation of societies. Then, among those very people, men who had never received a formal appointment to the Christian ministry began to preach to others the truth which they had themselves received. These he attempted to prevent; but finding that they possessed the requisite piety, knowledge, and talents for the work which they had undertaken, and that they were so far sanctioned by the divine blessing as that sinners were, by their means, reclaimed and converted, he was compelled to submit; being very much in the situation of St. Peter, when, in justification of his own proceedings with respect to Cornelius, he emphatically said, "What was I, that I could withstand God?"

Thus led into a course of usefulness which he had never contemplated, and to which, in the first instance, he had a strong aversion, he devoted his life to the one object of spreading true religion in the world. The things which he attempted to advance were not the mere forms and circumstantialia of Christianity, much less matters of doubtful disputation; but solid virtue; the love of God, and of all mankind; happiness in God, and entire conformity to his will. For these great purposes he preached, and wrote, and travelled, and sustained the charge of the numerous societies and Preachers; adjusting their differences, solving their doubts, and directing their movements. From these all-absorbing enterprises of truth and charity nothing could draw him aside. Neither the caresses of friends, nor the occasional perverseness of individuals among his own people, nor the opposition of furious mobs, nor the incessant and bitter peltings of the press, could induce him to falter in his career, or suspend his labours for a single day. Weaknesses and infirmities he had, for he was a fallen man; but who among his detractors emulate his active zeal, and patient, laborious love? His spiritual children will ever bless God for raising up such an instrument of good, especially in an age of infidelity, lukewarmness, and irreligion; for crowning his efforts and plans with such unexampled success; and for supporting him under cares and discouragements which feeble human nature could never of itself have sustained.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROGRESS OF RELIGION AFTER MR. WESLEY'S
DEATH.

THE death of its Founder formed a crisis in Wesleyan Methodism. While he lived, he was a bond of union, both to the Preachers and to all the societies; but whether their unity could be preserved when his personal influence was no longer felt, was a question of very difficult solution, concerning which there were great searchings of heart in many quarters. If the "Deed of Declaration" could be acted upon, so that the governing power which that instrument created should be generally acknowledged, there could be no just ground of painful apprehension; but if these objects could not be gained, the breaking up of the Connexion was inevitable. The Preachers felt the awful responsibility of their situation, and pledged themselves to abide by the principles which had regulated Mr. Wesley's conduct from the beginning. Some of them were men of more than ordinary experience, wisdom, and integrity. Among these, William Thompson and Alexander Mather stood pre-eminent. They were men of strong sense, sound discretion, firm purpose, deep piety; and were solemnly impressed with the justness of Mr. Wesley's plans, which they also thoroughly understood. These men of God, supported by their brethren, were a means of preserving the Methodist system in unimpaired efficiency in those critical times, and have thus laid the successive generations of both Preachers and people under lasting obligations.

The first attempt to set aside the "Deed of De-

claration," and by necessary consequence, to subvert the itinerant ministry which Mr. Wesley had instituted, was made by a body of Trustees of chapels, who claimed the right of appointing the Preachers to their respective pulpits. This scheme was resisted, and came to nought. Had it succeeded, the Methodist societies would at once have been converted into Independent churches; the regular exchange of Preachers would necessarily have ceased; and the plans of Mr. Wesley would have been only matters of history.

The next attempt was made by certain persons of democratic principles, but of very limited views, who contended for the introduction into the Conference, as members of that body, of men whom the "Deed of Declaration" never contemplated. This plan was also resisted, as being directly ruinous in its tendency. Had it been adopted, the Conference, as constituted by Mr. Wesley, would have had no existence; and no other body could have legally performed its prescribed functions. Another body could have had no just authority either to appoint the Preachers to the chapels, or to execute the discipline of the Connexion. The Conference was nothing but as it was defined, and invested with power, by the "Deed of Declaration; and, therefore, the moment that Deed was superseded, there would have been an end of the Wesleyan itinerancy and order. Another system might have been devised; but Wesleyan Methodism, in its essential principles, would have been no more. The body of the Preachers and people in that eventful age remained nobly steadfast in their adherence to the true Wesleyan principles; and, under God, the "Deed of Declaration" was their sheet-anchor in every storm. It

has been of equal advantage in more modern times ; and its utility and benefits will probably be as lasting as the world, according to the design of its author.

The Deed of Declaration being acknowledged, and the Connexional principle by this means preserved inviolate, the Conference very properly consented that, under certain regulations, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper should be administered in the Methodist chapels, and divine worship performed in the forenoon of the Sabbath : measures which Mr. Wesley himself had anticipated, and for which he had, therefore, provided, both by the preparation of a Liturgy, and the formal ordination of some of the Preachers. Various financial regulations were also adopted, for the purpose of removing all just ground of suspicion relative to the application of the funds of the Connexion. These arrangements gave general satisfaction, and were followed by the happiest results. Mutual confidence was preserved between the Preachers and people ; and spiritual religion spread in almost every direction. Extensive revivals of the work of God broke out in several places ; new societies were formed, and elder ones were quickened and augmented ; and many chapels, of various sizes, were erected and enlarged. Within ten years after Mr. Wesley's death, the societies were increased, in Great Britain alone, more than forty thousand ; and in twenty years they were increased upwards of one hundred thousand.

In the year 1811 a Bill was brought into the House of Lords, the professed object of which was to amend the Act of Toleration, but which, in fact, went to repeal its most important and beneficial provisions. Had it been made the law of the land, and strictly enforced, it would have effected the

entire subversion of the Wesleyan ministry. Its true character was ascertained, and an appeal was made to the country, when the petitions against it were so numerous and urgent, as to induce its withdrawal. New interpretations having been given to the Act of Toleration, which in a great measure defeated its object, application was made to Parliament, during the following year, for a new Act of a more definite character, and better suited to the state of the country, which was ultimately conceded. Thomas Allan, Esq., of London, was concerned in the drawing up of this new Act; and his exertions, with those of his friend, the late Joseph Butterworth, Esq., M.P., were of especial service in obtaining the invaluable boon. It has secured to the Wesleyan ministry and societies more ample protection than they heretofore enjoyed.

The steady advancement of the work at home was attended by corresponding prosperity abroad. The Missions were successfully carried on under the direction of Dr. Coke, who travelled through the kingdom, making collections in the congregations for their support; soliciting subscriptions from wealthy individuals, wherever he could gain access; selecting suitable men for the work, both among the Itinerants and the Local Preachers; and, by a regular correspondence with the Missionaries, giving counsel and encouragement, as their cases might require. His untiring zeal and perseverance, connected with his superior education and very gentlemanly manners, eminently qualified him for this difficult and weighty service. For many an imprisoned Missionary in the West Indies did he obtain liberty, by his personal applications to men in power; and several persecuting acts of the local legislatures did he pre-

vail upon the Government at home to disallow. From the time of Mr. Wesley's death, in 1791, to the year 1811, under the active and vigilant superintendence of this most benevolent and devoted man, the Missionaries in the West Indies, and in British North America, were increased from 21 to 43, besides 11 who were employed in the Irish Mission among the neglected Papists; and the members of society in those foreign stations were increased from 6525, to 13,382. The Doctor would have introduced a much greater number of labourers into the Mission field, had his resources been more ample. Many "home Missionaries," preaching in the most destitute and neglected parts of England, were supported out of the fund from which he drew his supplies for the foreign work.

At the Conference of 1813, Dr. Coke, then in the sixty-seventh year of his age, expressed an earnest desire to proceed to the East Indies, for the purpose of establishing a Mission there. Eighteen times had he crossed the Atlantic Ocean for Missionary objects; yet his godly ardour was unabated, as his conviction of the truth of Christianity, and of its importance to mankind, became increasingly strong and influential. Some of his brethren, recollecting his advanced age, the difficulties which would be necessarily connected with the undertaking, and the serious inconveniences which the Missions already in existence would experience in consequence of his departure, attempted to dissuade him from the enterprise, desirable as they confessed it to be. He heard their reasonings and remonstrances; and then, bursting into tears, he exclaimed, in a manner which they could not resist, "If you will not let me go, you will break my heart!"

His brethren withdrew their opposition; and this honoured patron and friend of Missions, accompanied by James Lynch, William Ault, George Erskine, William M. Harvard, Thomas Squance, Benjamin Clough, and John M'Kenny, embarked for the East, in December, 1813, intending to appoint these esteemed men to such fields of evangelical labour as actual observation might recommend. On the third of May following he was found dead in his cabin, having expired, it was believed, in a fit of apoplexy. Thus ended the life and labours of this distinguished Minister, whose name will ever be remembered in honourable association with modern Missions. Next to Mr. Wesley, no man was ever connected with the Methodist body who contributed more to extend the blessings of Christianity among mankind.

The Mission to the East was not abandoned when the spirit of Dr. Coke fled to paradise, and his remains were committed to the great deep. His companions, though young and inexperienced, proceeded on their voyage, resolved to act as Providence might direct; and on their arrival at the place of their destination, their forlorn situation excited a deep and general sympathy. Money was advanced to them on the faith of the Connexion at home; and they entered upon their work in full reliance upon the Lord, whose Gospel they had come to teach. The Mission which they began under these circumstances has already exerted a powerful influence upon the island of Ceylon. It has also long since been extended to the continent of India, and rises every year in interest and importance.

Strange as it may appear, the Wesleyan Missions were greatly advanced in consequence of Dr. Coke's departure from Europe, and his sudden death. The

fact is, the Connexion had almost entirely relied upon his personal exertions, both in directing the operations of the Missions, and in providing the means of their support. When he was no more, the Preachers and people awoke from their supineness, and felt the necessity of combined and strenuous efforts, that they might maintain the Missions which were already formed, and commence others, which were greatly needed, and in many cases loudly called for. The Rev. George Morley, the Superintendent of the Leeds Circuit, suggested to his colleagues, and the friends in general, the formation of a Missionary Society, in that town, by means of a public meeting. They approved of the project; the Rev. Richard Watson and the Rev. James Buckley were engaged as Preachers; and Thomas Thompson, Esq., M. P., consented to take the chair at the meeting, which was well attended, and answered the end proposed. These arrangements were greatly facilitated by the very judicious and efficient co-operation of the Rev. Jabez Bunting, who was then stationed in the Leeds Circuit, and was also the Chairman of the District. A new and mighty impulse was thus given to the Mission work in the Connexion. Other places, in swift succession, followed the noble example of Leeds, till the Methodist congregations, from the Land's End to the Tweed, caught the sacred flame. Collectors offered their services in all directions; the hearts of the people were every where impressed and opened by just reports of the real state of the Heathen, and by the communication of authentic Missionary intelligence; and money was, from year to year, poured into the sacred treasury beyond all former precedent. Missionaries also have continued willingly to offer themselves even for the

most hazardous and difficult stations ; and doors of entrance are almost every year opened in the most unexpected quarters.

One instrument all men acknowledged to have been raised up by an especial Providence in connexion with the Mission department,—the late Rev. Richard Watson : a man of the richest mental endowments, the whole of which he brought to bear upon this work. He pleaded the sacred cause from the pulpit, the platform, and the press, with a force of argument, an originality and beauty of illustration, a sublimity of thought, and a power of persuasion, which perhaps no man, whether speaker or writer, ever surpassed ; and, in union with his brethren, he directed the practical working of the Mission system with a sound judgment, and patient, persevering zeal. He wore out his life in this holy service, consumed by the quenchless ardour of his own spirit. More than any other individual, this distinguished Minister for a time supplied the place of the lamented Dr. Coke.

It is a striking proof of the providential character of the Missions in question, that when the most gifted and efficient agents are removed, the work suffers no declension. After the death of Dr. Coke, whose place it was thought no other person could supply, the Missions prospered beyond all former example ; and in some quarters the result has been the same since Mr. Watson finished his brilliant and holy career. Allusion is here particularly intended to the Wesleyan Missions in the South Seas, where the savage inhabitants of whole islands have abandoned the idols of their fathers ; and where the people by thousands have become the spiritual worshippers of God. Civilization there walks hand in

hand with Christianity ; children, and even old people, are gathered together in schools ; and persons of all ranks are successfully learning the useful arts. Like the primitive disciples also, these people, constrained by the love of Christ, are panting to carry the Gospel into " the regions beyond." The change which has taken place in the spirit and habits of those savage tribes, is so sudden, deep, and extensive,—so obviously above all human power,—that he is blind who cannot see in it the working of that Almighty Spirit, by whose agency three thousand persons in Jerusalem were in one day converted from Jewish obstinacy and unbelief to the faith of Christ.

The Wesleyan Missionaries, accredited Ministers of the Connexion, are about 311 in number. They are assisted in their work by Catechists, Local Preachers, Assistants, Superintendents of schools, Schoolmasters, and Schoolmistresses, Artisans, &c. ; of whom about 200 are employed at a moderate salary, and 2600 afford their services gratuitously. The stations occupied by the Missionaries in different parts of the world are about 204 ; each station being in general the head of a Circuit of towns and villages around, embracing a numerous population brought under evangelical instruction. The principal stations of the Society's Missionaries are in Western and Southern Africa, Ceylon, Continental India, New South-Wales, Van-Diemen's Land, New-Zealand, Tonga, Habai Islands, Vavou Islands, Fejee Islands, the West Indies, and British North America. To these must be added those in Ireland, Sweden, Germany, France, Cadiz, Gibraltar, and Malta. Schools are conducted by the Missionaries themselves, or under their immediate superintendence. Christian worship forms a part of the school arrangements.

The holy Scriptures, in the language vernacular on the several stations, are invariably used in the schools by those who are sufficiently advanced to read them. The Masters and Mistresses are selected for their piety and zeal, as well as with a regard to their other qualifications; and the whole system is conducted on the avowed principle of spreading at once the knowledge of letters, and the knowledge of God. The usefulness of Mission Schools is particularly seen in the raising up of a native ministry. In Ceylon, in the South Seas, in Southern Africa, and in Western Africa, are found zealous Preachers of divine truth, who received their education in the Mission Schools; and many of them trace their first religious impressions to the instructions which they enjoyed there. Edward Frazer, whose recent visit to England will not soon be forgotten, is a fine specimen of that native ministry which may be expected to arise in the West Indies, now that slavery is abolished.

The number of scholars, adults and children, taught in the Mission Schools, is 49,266. The members of society under the care of the Missionaries, exclusive of those in Ireland, are above 65,000. Persons belonging to the Mission congregations, not in religious society, may be fairly estimated at an equal number. To these may be added the children and adults who are under school instruction; making a total of more than 180,000 persons, who are directly receiving spiritual advantage by means of the Wesleyan Missions.

In Ceylon, in Africa, in the Friendly Islands, and in New Zealand, the Missionaries employ printing establishments. Valuable translations of the Scriptures, and of various other works, have been effected

by the Missionaries ; by whom, in more than twenty different languages, the Gospel is preached to some of the most remote and idolatrous nations of the earth.

For the support of this vast enterprise, the Wesleyan societies, assisted by the liberality of the Christian public, raised, in the year 1837, the sum of £83,648. 10s. 6d.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, in the United States of America, considerably outnumbers the sister Connexion in Great Britain. The societies, which are scattered over an immense tract of country, are placed under the care of twenty-eight Conferences ; which meet annually, and are superintended by six Bishops, who are chiefly distinguished from their brethren by the abundance of their labours, and the frequency and length of their journeys. The Ministers in general are eminently *Travelling Preachers*. They follow the settlers into the remotest wildernesses, proclaiming to them the word of life ; collecting them together in religious society, that they may stir up each other's minds by way of remembrance, and watch over one another in the Lord ; administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper ; that these sons of the forest, in the midst of their daily toils, and far distant from the crowded haunts of men, may not forget the more important business of their salvation, and the strict account which they must render to the Judge of all. But for these Itinerant Ministers of Christ, oftener seen on horseback, each carrying with him his limited wardrobe and his Bible, than in the study or the parlour, many even of the emigrants from happy England, who have been nursed in Christianity, would never hear of the mercy of their Saviour, and

would inevitably fall into practical Heathenism. In the deep woods of America the scene contemplated by Mr. Charles Wesley is beautifully realized :—

“ Ye mountains and vales, in praises abound ;
 Ye hills and ye dales, continue the sound :
 Break forth into singing, ye trees of the wood ;
 For Jesus is bringing lost sinners to God ! ”

And the heart of many a solitary emigrant has beaten with holy joy while singing, in the same holy strain,—

“ Atonement He made for every one ;
 The debt he hath paid, the work he hath done :
 Shout all the creation, below and above,
 Ascribing salvation to Jesus's love ! ”

The Missionary energies of the Methodist Episcopal Church are mostly expended upon the Indian tribes, and the scattered white and black population, of their own continent. Upwards of 2000 Indians are acknowledged as regular members of the Church. That Church has also a prosperous Mission at Liberia, on the African coast, where twelve Missionaries are employed ; and another at Texas, recently begun, from which the accounts are very encouraging. At this place four large Circuits have been formed ; and some conversions have already taken place, which give the promise of future success.

The efforts of that Church in the cause of education are noble and praiseworthy. In addition to many minor and private establishments, there are, in immediate connexion with the several Conferences, six Collegiate institutions, and one University. Four of these are west of the Alleghany mountains, in the great valley of Mississipi, and its tributary waters ; and three are in the Atlantic States. All

of them possess the power of conferring academic degrees. "One of the leading objects of our institutions has been," says Dr. Fisk, the Principal of the Wesleyan University, "to secure a religious influence, and a suitable religious training, for our youth. We think, if religion, and that modification of it which we profess, is worth any thing for the parents, it is equally valuable for the children; and if it is beneficial for the world, it should be maintained: and who shall maintain it, if our children forsake the religion of their fathers? In this object the Methodist Church in America has not been disappointed. The God of all grace has specially and signally marked the work with the seal of his approval. We have witnessed many gracious outpourings of the Holy Spirit upon our schools; and a great portion of those who leave these institutions go away with fixed principles of religious doctrine and experience, that will, no doubt, govern their future lives."*

In the Methodist Episcopal Church are 3106 Itinerant Ministers; 216 who are superannuated; and 5792 Local Preachers. The private members amount to 686,549; of whom 605,212 are whites, 79,236 are coloured, and 2101 are Indians. What hath God wrought since Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor embarked for that Continent in the year 1769, with the prayers and blessings of Mr. Wesley!

The Methodist Church in Canada is distinct from that of the United States. It is divided into 47 Circuits, exclusive of 47 Mission stations, and employs 78 Preachers, with 11 who are supernumerary. The members of society are 14,000. Were it not for the ministry of the Wesleyan Preachers in Upper and

* Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine for December, 1836.

Lower Canada, many thousands of the British settlers would be entirely destitute of the ordinances of Christianity. The Wesleyan Mission among the Canadian Indians is full of interest. Of this race of red men, no fewer than 1500 are now regular members of religious society. They have abandoned their savage mode of life, and reside together in villages, where they have schools and places of worship. Two of their native Preachers, Peter Jones and John Sunday, have visited England, where their manly sense and sound piety excited the liveliest pleasure.

The Methodist Connexion in Ireland comprehends 49 Circuits, and 18 Mission stations; 160 Preachers including the Missionaries, and those who are on the supernumerary list; and 26,244 members of society. To some persons this number will appear small; but the reason is obvious. The superstitions and errors of Popery occupy the minds of a large majority of the people of Ireland, and render them hostile to the truth; while incessant political agitation diverts their attention from it. There is another cause, to which few people duly advert. In many parts of Ireland the law is comparatively powerless, and fails to afford adequate protection to either the lives or the property of the Protestants. Hence the frequency of Protestant emigration. Within the last fifteen years no fewer than ten thousand members of the Methodist societies in Ireland have left their native country, and sought a more safe and quiet residence in other lands, mostly in America. Not a few of these were as the life-blood of the societies to which they belonged. They were generally persons of some property, the support and stay of the cause in their different localities; and in several in-

stances their removal has led to the withdrawal of the preaching, and the consequent dissolution of the societies and congregations ; no other persons in the same places being able to afford shelter to the servants of God by whom they had been regularly visited. The preservation and revival of Protestantism in that part of the empire are, in the first instance, mainly attributable, under God, to the Christian and patriotic efforts of the two Wesleys, and those of their fellow-labourers and successors, the Methodist Preachers. For many years they stood almost alone and unfriended in their generous endeavours to rescue the Irish people from the hateful and degrading tyranny of a wicked and rapacious priesthood, who "destroyed souls for the sake of dishonest gain," and of secular ambition. These upright and devoted men have meekly endured bitter privations and opposition ; but their "judgment is with the Lord, and their work with their God." The Romish Priests have often stood in the ways leading to Methodist chapels, with horsewhips in their hands, to drive away such members of their congregations as might stray in that direction ; and to meet the spiritual necessities of a people thus oppressed, and cruelly kept in ignorance and sin, the Methodist Ministers have preached on horseback, in the fairs and markets, where many a deluded votary of Rome has not only heard words whereby he might be saved, but whereby he has been actually turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. The venerable Gideon Ouseley, with several of his brethren, has grown gray in this benevolent and holy service.

The state of the Wesleyan Connexion in England is at present such as not only to afford satisfaction,

but to call for gratitude. The ebullition of democratic feeling which took place in some of the societies a few years ago, and was called forth by the spirit of the times, has, through the great mercy of God, entirely subsided; and the attempt which was then made to subvert the Wesleyan plan of discipline has not only failed, but been overruled for good. That discipline stands upon a surer foundation, and is more deeply rooted in the confidence both of the Preachers and the societies than it ever was at any former period. The wisdom and propriety of Mr. Wesley's maxim is now every where practically acknowledged: "Do not mend our rules, but keep them, and that for conscience' sake." Many of the societies have, within the last two or three years, been greatly enlarged; and never was the Wesleyan ministry so numerously attended, since its commencement, as it is at this day. Expectations of increased spiritual prosperity are generally excited; and more signal displays of the Holy Spirit's power and love, in the conversion of ungodly men, and in the improved piety of believers, are almost every where anticipated.

This happy state of things has been brought about, by God's blessing upon the firm stand which was made, four or five years ago, in behalf of the true Wesleyan principles, against an unhallowed attempt to subvert them. To break down the hedge of the discipline by which the purity of the body had till that period been preserved, and secure for every Preacher the liberty to do what was right in his own eyes during the intervals of Conference, an appeal was made to the Courts of Chancery; which not only failed entirely of its object, but obtained for Mr. Wesley's Deed of Declaration, and the discipline

of the body founded upon it, the direct sanction of his Honour Mr. Vice-Chancellor Shadwell, and of the Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst: so that the opposition then raised turned out, by God's overruling providence, to the fullest establishment of that godly order which it was intended for ever to sweep away. The names of John Burton, James Wood, John Marsden, James Fildes, and their brethren, the Trustees of the Oldham-street chapel in Manchester, and of Robert Newton, the Chairman of the District, against whom the suit was directed, and who stood forward with unflinching fidelity in the day of trial, resolved to stand or fall with Wesleyan Methodism,—will be transmitted with honour to posterity. In withstanding this attempt to subvert the goodly system of the body, these faithful men were efficiently assisted by the professional talent of their Solicitor, T. Percival Bunting, Esq., of Manchester, who was equally concerned with themselves to maintain the system inviolate.

There is another individual who in those times was specially singled out, by a licentious press, as an object of obloquy, for no other reason than this,—that he was the ablest advocate of the true Wesleyan system. Enlargement upon this subject would be improper; for JABEZ BUNTING is still living: and long may he live as an ornament and pillar of the Connexion! It is, however, bare justice to add, that to him, more than to any other man since the death of Mr. Wesley, is the Methodist body indebted for carrying out its principles into practical effect, and for fixing its various institutions upon a permanent and liberal base.

There are about 3000 Wesleyan chapels in England, besides a vast number of other places where

God's word is regularly preached, and public prayer-meetings are held. Several of the chapels are of very large dimensions, especially in the principal manufacturing towns, such as Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, and Huddersfield; and they are filled every Sabbath by willing crowds. In Leeds alone the chapels contain four thousand free sittings for the accommodation of the poor; and in many other places the spiritual necessities of the lower classes of society are met in the same liberal manner. The sum of money which Wesleyan Methodism has expended in providing chapel-room for the vastly increasing population of the country is almost incredible. The number of private members in religious society is 296,801. The number of Ministers, itinerant and supernumerary, is 1019, who are perfectly united together in the same mind and the same judgment on all the leading subjects of Christian theology. The important body of Local Preachers, we presume, cannot be fewer than 4000.

When the system of Sunday-school instruction was first introduced, it met with Mr. Wesley's cordial approval; and in this service the Connexion has continued to take an active part. Exclusive of Wales, where the system is extensively pursued, but from which no returns have been recently received, there are in Great Britain 3339 Wesleyan Sunday-schools, including 341,442 children, and employing 59,277 Teachers, whose services are all gratuitous. In the support of these institutions the sum of about £17,800 is annually expended. Many of them are furnished with libraries, from which the senior scholars, and the families to which they belong, are supplied with books of a pious and useful character. Many excellent Day-schools have also been formed

in connexion with Methodist chapels: and their number is increasing every year.

In most of the larger towns, as well as in several villages, there are also Wesleyan Tract Societies, conducted upon the loan system. Visitors are appointed to different districts, whose office is to call at every house in order, offering to the families the loan of a religious tract for a given period, and receiving those that were left at the time of the last visit. By this means divine light is diffused among careless and ungodly people; neglected children are often introduced to Sunday-schools; and whole families are sometimes induced to sanctify the Sabbath, and attend the house of God.

The Naval and Military Bible Society was originally formed by a small number of Wesleyan Methodists, in the year 1779. George Cussons, of Wardour-street, London, took an active part in devising the plan and in directing its first operations. It afterwards obtained high patronage; and has been of incalculable benefit to the brave men who form the army and navy of England.

The monthly Magazine which Mr. Wesley instituted about sixty years ago, is still carried on, and widely circulated. It is conducted upon its original theological principles, though it is less polemical in its character than it was in his hands, the circumstances of the times being changed. It is still employed in repelling unjust attacks upon the body, for which, unhappily, the calls are too frequent. To this periodical, the oldest of the kind now in England, there have been added, since Mr. Wesley's death, four others,—the Missionary Notices, the Youth's Instructor, the Cottager's Friend, and the Child's Magazine,—all of which are very extensively

read. To the invaluable works of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher there have also been added those of Mr. Benson, Dr. Adam Clarke, Mr. Watson, Mr. Sutcliffe, Mr. Edmondson, Mr. Treffry, and those of his late gifted and lamented son; with a vast number of biographical and other publications, adapted to private and family reading. The literature of the Connexion, now somewhat voluminous, and in several of its departments extremely rich and valuable, finds its way into many villages and hamlets where other books are little known. The Bible, with one or more of the Wesleyan Commentaries, and other books from the Wesleyan press, constitute many a well-read cottage library.

Upwards of fifty years ago the Benevolent or Stranger's Friend Society was instituted by some individuals belonging to the Wesleyan body. It appears to have been commenced about the same time both in London and Manchester; and its principles and plan were speedily adopted in most of the large towns of the kingdom. Its design is to afford relief to strangers in the season of want and sickness; and the administration of pecuniary relief is always accompanied by spiritual instruction and prayer. The visitors, male and female, are generally persons of deep piety, well-instructed in the things of God, and of admirable zeal and patience. Not a few of them, it is believed, have died by contagious fevers, caught in their enterprise of charity. Many a profligate wanderer from God and righteousness have these messengers of mercy led to the compassionate Saviour of men; and many a valuable life have they been a means of preserving by the timely supply of food and medicine. Parents dying of want have been snatched from the yawning grave,

and spared to protect and bless their children. In London this Society is liberally supported by other denominations of Christians: and he must possess a heart of stone who can read in its annual Reports the record of its operations, without tears of sympathy with the sufferers, and of gratitude for the help afforded to them.

In some instances the generous anxiety of the societies and congregations to provide accommodation for themselves, and for the people by whom they were surrounded, has led them to erect chapels of larger dimensions, and of a more costly kind, than their means would justify; and hence debts were accumulated to an amount which excited just and general alarm. To relieve the cases of distress which were thus created, funds have within the last few years been formed, for the purpose of calling forth and assisting local exertion; and the last Report of the General Chapel Fund contains the following intelligence:—
“The Committee are greatly rejoiced to be able to state, that the actual debt upon chapels, now extinguished by the operation of the present Loan Fund, is £93,398; which, added to £51,000, liquidated by the former loan system, makes a grand total of £147,398. For the removal of so great impediments as most of these debts were found to be to the prosperity of the work of God, by the general and steady efforts of the friends of Wesleyan Methodism, the Committee cannot but express their gratitude to the Great Head of the church, who has so graciously disposed the hearts of his people to devise liberal things.” These funds have been greatly indebted to the sound discretion and unwearied zeal of Messrs. Thomas Marriott, James Heald, John Fernley, Robert Wood, Francis A. West, and Jona-

than Crowther, the esteemed Treasurers and Secretaries ; and to the valuable co-operation of Messrs. Thomas Crook, William Naylor, and John Mason.

To render the Wesleyan ministry increasingly efficient, and better adapted to the character and circumstances of the present times, the Theological Institution was formed in the year 1834. None are admitted as students there but such candidates for the ministry as are approved, in the first instance, by the Circuits to which they belong, and the District Committees before whom they are severally examined ; as well as by the Conference, to whom the case of each person is reported. The undertaking has been already crowned with a success far surpassing what could have been reasonably anticipated in so short a time. The theological and literary training which the students have received has been of the greatest advantage ; and the benefits are strikingly apparent both at home and on several of the Mission stations. The managing Committee are particularly happy in having obtained the services of the Rev. Dr. Hannah, Tutor in the several provinces of Theological instruction, and those of the Rev. Samuel Jones, A.M., of Trinity College, Dublin, for the Classical and Mathematical departments. Recent occurrences in the Institution forcibly remind one of what took place in a similar establishment at Trevecka, of which that holy man, John Fletcher, of Madeley, was the head. When he visited "the sons of the Prophets" who were under his care, it is said by his friend and biographer, Joseph Benson, who witnessed what he describes, that, "being convinced that to be filled with the Holy Ghost was a better qualification for the ministry of the Gospel than any classical learning, (although

that, too, is useful in its place,) after speaking awhile in the school-room, he used frequently to say, 'As many of you as are athirst for this fulness of the Spirit, follow me into my room.' On this many of us have instantly followed him, and there continued two or three hours, wrestling like Jacob for the blessing, praying one after another, till we could bear to kneel no longer. This was not done once or twice, but many times. And I have sometimes seen him, on these occasions, once in particular, so filled with the love of God, that he could contain no more." * Guarded as the Institution is, and teaching as it does the pure principles of the Wesleyan theology, it cannot fail to be an extensive and permanent blessing to the Connexion.

Occupying a distinct and peculiar position between strict Churchmanship and systematic Dissent, the Wesleyan Methodists, amidst the collision of parties, have, within the last few years, been the objects of severe censure both on the right hand and on the left. They have, however, steadily adhered to the principles upon which their fathers acted from the beginning; and judging from their past conduct, they are not likely soon to alter their course. Their great calling is that of spreading spiritual religion in the world; the religion which makes men partakers of the divine nature, and prepares them to share in the glories and happiness of the heavenly state, when the turmoils of party, and all the transitory concerns of earth shall have passed away, and be forgotten. The principles of strict Dissent, including that of the unlawfulness of religious Establishments, and the sin of being connected with them, they never can profess without a direct

* *Life of Mr. Fletcher*, p. 156. Edit. 1806.

reflection upon the memory of their revered Founder; much less can they be parties in any attempt to effect the subversion of the established Church of this country: and such a formal union with the established Church as implies an abandonment of their own ministry, and of their peculiar form of discipline, would be equally a violation of Mr. Wesley's design. He executed the Deed of Declaration, as we have already seen, "in order to fix them" (the Methodists) "upon such a foundation as is likely to stand as long as the sun and moon endure." The Church, with its three orders of Ministers, can never sanction the ordination which the Methodist Preachers have received; and those Preachers can never resign their charge without sinning against Christ, by whom they conscientiously believe they are called to the office and work of Ministers in the church of God. Nor have they any right so to trifle with the consciences of mankind as to withdraw from more than a million of people the religious ordinances and means of salvation which they prefer before all others. There are principles concerned in questions of this nature more deep and momentous than superficial declaimers ever imagine.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

SUCH are the leading facts connected with the rise and progress of what is called "Wesleyan Methodism." The entire system, comprehending all its arrangements, some writers have attributed to the genius of John Wesley, stimulated partly by piety

and benevolence, partly by an indefinite something which they have called "enthusiasm," and partly by ambition. He had no preconcerted plan whatever, when he entered upon his career as an Itinerant Preacher, but followed what he believed to be the openings and guidance of divine Providence, often in direct opposition to his own prejudices and habits; and it is remarkable, that he never had occasion to retrace any of the steps which he had taken, or to abandon any of the measures which he adopted for the advancement of religion. What the world called "Methodism" he was accustomed to denominate "the work of God," especially when considered in reference to its effects upon individuals. And such it unquestionably is, if we are to judge according to the principles laid down in the Gospel. The members of the Methodist societies are, in the first instance, convinced of sin, and weep and pray under a consciousness of their guilt and danger, as did the three thousand Jews on the day of pentecost, Saul at Damascus, and the jailor at Philippi. Like those ancient penitents, they obtain relief, not by works of law, much less by worldly amusements or gay company, but by believing in Christ as the great and only atonement. When they have thus come to Christ, trusting in his sacrifice and intercession, they find rest to their souls. Their consciences are purged from dead works; guilty fear gives place in their minds to filial love; sin ceases to have the dominion over them; they hate it, and abstain from all appearance of it. They love God; they sanctify his Sabbaths; they reverence his name; they delight in his ordinances; and they daily worship him in spirit and in truth. They love one another; they take pleasure in each other's society, and delight to serve each

other in love ; joyfully anticipating an endless union in heaven with Christ their common Lord and Saviour. At the same time they cherish a kind and generous concern for the welfare of the whole human race ; and hence their exertions to bring mankind, both at home and abroad, into the same holy and happy state with themselves. It cannot be said that all have attained to this ; but this is the standard to which they are all taught to aspire : and all this is unquestionably realized by tens of thousands of people in these realms, whose spirit and conduct are daily open to the public observation.

Wherever these fruits of righteousness are, there God is present in the power of his Spirit. They are not produced by any mere efforts of human nature. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean" but God himself? Repentance is the gift of Christ. (Acts v. 31.) The Holy Spirit takes away the heart of stone, and gives the heart of flesh. (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) "It is God that justifieth." (Rom. viii. 33.) It is "the God of hope" that "fills" men "with all joy and peace in believing." (Rom. xv. 13.) It is He that sends forth the Spirit of his Son into the hearts of believers, "crying, Abba, Father ;" and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God. (Gal. iv. 6 ; Rom. viii. 16.) It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that makes men free from the law of sin and death. (Rom. viii. 2.) The holy love of God and man is an emanation from Him, the fountain and pattern of all excellence. "Love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." (1 John iv. 7.) It is the Father that makes men meet for the inheritance of the saints in light ; (Col. i. 12 ;) and of those who, possessing

this meetness, groan to be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven, it is said; "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God." (2 Cor. v. 5.)

The religion which is taught in the Methodist pulpits, and exemplified in the experience and conduct of the Methodist societies in general, has ever been regarded by its adherents as the very Christianity which is described in the New Testament, and which was practised in the apostolical churches. The resemblance between the primitive Christians and the Wesleyan societies has indeed been confessed by a competent and disinterested witness, Archdeacon Paley, himself not very prone to indulge in enthusiastic ardour, or flights of imagination. "After men became Christians," says he, "much of their time was spent in prayer and devotion, in religious meetings, in celebrating the eucharist, in conferences, in exhortations, in preaching, in an affectionate intercourse with one another, and correspondence with other societies. Perhaps their mode of life, in its form and habit, was not very unlike the *Unitas Fratrum*, or the modern Methodists." *

The Methodist ministry, under which these effects are produced, has, from the beginning, unquestionably been sanctioned by the divine influence and blessing. The success of Mr. Wesley's preaching has been attributed to his simple and effective eloquence, gently touching the springs of human action, and to the interesting objects by which he was often surrounded, especially when addressing multitudes in the open air. But those who thus speak forget that the same effects were produced under the preaching of other men, many of whom were "rude

* Evidences of Religion, Part First, chap. i.

in speech;" and that they were also produced in plain chapels, in barns, in private houses, and in the entire absence of those objects which are assumed to possess a charm so powerful. It should be observed, too, that the preaching in question was not formed according to the rules of art, like that of the French orators who figured in the court of Louis the Fourteenth. It was not characterized by pretty and elegant turns of thought; nor was it generally addressed to persons of poetic and tender sensibilities; but more frequently to men who were brutally ignorant, and diabolically wicked. Yet many of these were converted from the error of their way. Theirs was not a sentimental conversion, but a thorough renewal of their nature. They were turned from the love and practice of sin to both inward and outward holiness; and the change was permanent. From the time of their conversion till their spirits returned to God, their deportment was blameless; and their spirit devout, cheerful, and benevolent.

Here again, according to the Bible, (and its teaching on this subject is confirmed by true philosophy,) the hand of God is to be acknowledged. Even apostolical preaching without the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, must have been powerless and ineffectual. "I have planted," says St. Paul, "and Apollos watered;" but the Apostle, with all his acquired learning and inspired theology, and Apollos, eloquent as he was and mighty in the Scriptures, must both have laboured in vain, had no supernatural agency been put forth. "God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." (1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.) Without him talents of the highest order may be put in requisition; philosophy,

learning, fancy, argument, taste, may put forth all their energies ; yet the callous and depraved heart of fallen man will not surrender itself to Christ. Men are saved only when the Gospel comes to them "not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. i. 5.) Throughout the New Testament, therefore, the success of the Christian ministry is assumed to be a subject of prayer to the God of all grace. For when Christ is not present in the power of his Spirit, the demon of human depravity sets the Preacher at defiance. "The carnal mind," which is "enmity against God," will never yield to any power less than divine. The Wesleys and their fellow-labourers were eminently men of prayer. They called incessantly upon God, that he would not only touch their lips with fire, but apply the truths of his law and Gospel to the understandings and consciences of their hearers ; and the result is matter of history. The promised sign was given. Thousands of men, proverbially profligate and wicked, were undeniably made partakers of the divine nature ; and wherever the "clean heart" and the "right spirit" are found, they exist as the direct "creation" of God. (Psalm li. 10.)

That a great improvement has taken place in the established Church of this country, is a fact which no candid observer can deny, and in which every good man must rejoice. There has been within her pale a great increase of spiritual religion, and of active and laborious zeal. The efforts of Churchmen in providing evangelical instruction in neglected districts at home, in the distribution of the holy Scriptures, in extending the benefits of education, and in sending Missionaries to the Heathen, exceed those of former times beyond all comparison. Several of

her children delight to contemplate this improved state of things as a benefit which has been conferred upon her altogether independently of Methodism, and especially of Wesleyan Methodism. Far be it from us to say anything on this subject that can be considered justly offensive to any sincere and upright Churchman who is sensitive concerning his Church's honour. The facts of the case, however, should be stated, that disinterested observers may form their own judgment on the question. We think it undeniable, 1. That this revival of spiritual religion did not appear in the Church till the voices of the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield had been heard in almost every part of the land, and the influence of their labours was strongly felt. 2. That several of the more devout, zealous, and influential of the Clergy, during the last century, were avowedly in close connexion with the Wesleys. Such were Piers and Peronet in Kent; Grimshaw, in the west of Yorkshire; Sellon, in Leicestershire; Fletcher, in Madeley; and Crosse, in Bradford. Mr. Crosse even proposed to resign his vicarage, and become a Methodist Preacher; and for one year his name actually stood on the Minutes of Conference. He was induced to abandon his design, by the advice of Dr. Coke, and of some other Methodist Preachers, who thought that he might more effectually serve the cause of Christ in the Church than in the Methodist Connexion. 3. Several others of the more pious and spiritual of the Clergy were for many years the personal friends of the two Wesleys. Though some of them disapproved of the anti-Calvinistical theology of these eminent men, and of the alleged irregularities of Methodism, yet they either corresponded with the two brothers, invited them to preach in

their churches, or had frequent interviews with them, and were unquestionably affected and stimulated by their spirit and proceedings. This was the case with Walker and Thompson in Cornwall; Vivian in Devonshire; Venn in Huddersfield; Crooke in Leeds and Hunslet; Hervey in Northamptonshire; Jones in Southwark; Stillingfleet in Hotham; Jesse in the east of Yorkshire; Easterbrook in Bristol; Simpson in Macclesfield; and many others. 4. Within the last fifty years many Clergymen, of the character in question, have been members of Wesleyan families, in which they received their early religious light and impressions. Others of them were educated by Lady Huntingdon, at her College of Trevecka, and were first made acquainted with divine truth in connexion with what is called Calvinistic Methodism. 5. Wesleyan Methodism has greatly contributed to raise the tone of public feeling on the subject of religion, so as to induce greater circumspection in the clerical character than was previously either expected or required. Irregularities which were formerly tolerated in the Ministers of religion, as matters of course, would now become subjects of general complaint and animadversion. The influence of the ministry is greatly increased by its superior purity. 6. It will hardly be denied that, in some instances at least, among other motives, Churchmen have been stimulated, by the active and aggressive character of Methodism, to the erection of new churches, the formation of schools, and the establishment of Sunday-evening lectures; from all of which the Church has been essentially benefited, and the national interests promoted. 7. It is also, we think, undeniable, that the ministry of the Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield, with that of their brethren who

were like-minded with them, has mainly contributed to bring into disrepute the cold and heartless preaching which formerly prevailed, and of which Archbishop Secker and Bishop Horsley so loudly complained. The peculiar doctrines of Christianity are far more generally insisted upon in the pulpits of the Establishment than they formerly were; and listening crowds now attend every Sabbath in places which were formerly all but deserted, because they "hear words whereby they may be saved," delivered with an earnestness and fervour becoming the subjects which are discoursed upon. Whatever of spiritual good exists in any section of the universal church is produced by the gracious power of Him who worketh all in all; and if the Holy Spirit has, in his merciful sovereignty, made Methodism, in any of its forms, a means of spiritual life and purity to the Establishment of this country, there is neither candour nor piety in the denial of the fact.

That the Church of England has been of the greatest advantage to the Wesleyan Connexion, considered as a distinct community, is freely conceded. It was in the Church that the venerable Founders of our societies were trained; and Mr. Wesley declares himself to have been more confirmed in the doctrine of salvation by faith by reading the Homilies, than by any other means. Sellon and Fletcher, the ablest defenders of the Wesleyan theology against the attacks which were made upon it during the last century, were both Clergymen. When the early Methodist Preachers went through the land, declaring the necessity of inward religion, as distinguished from mere forms of worship and from moral duties, they found the way so far made ready for them by the Church, that an appeal to the

Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies, was almost everywhere responded to; and a nominal Christianity prepared the way for that "kingdom" which "is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The incomparable Liturgy of the established Church is regularly used in many of the Wesleyan chapels in England, and in all the Mission chapels in the West Indies. Translations of it have been made by Wesleyan Missionaries into various languages, for the use of their congregations, especially in the East. It is always used in the administration of the Lord's supper both at home and abroad. At the same time, the sanctified learning which is displayed in the profound and orthodox writings of the Divines of the Church of England has ever been of the greatest benefit to the Wesleyan body, as it has to the more serious and religious part of the community in general. This is a debt which can never be repaid. The writings of Churchmen in opposition to Infidelity, Popery, and the Arian and Socinian heresies, are beyond all praise.

Subsequently to the rise of Methodism there was also a revival of evangelical religion among the Dissenters, towards which the ministry of Mr. Whitefield contributed more directly than that of the two Wesleys. Yet many of the Dissenting Ministers, and not a few private members of their churches, have either belonged to Wesleyan families, or at one period of their lives were connected with the Wesleyan societies. Indirectly, therefore, as in the case of the established Church, the Dissenters are under considerable obligations to the labours of John Wesley, strongly as some of them may express their dislike of his theology, and his

views of ecclesiastical order. The cold and chilling Arianism which was introduced into the Dissenting churches at the beginning of the last century, led to the Socinianism of Taylor, Priestley, and Belsham ; but other churches were formed, in almost all the large towns of the kingdom, which not only maintain all the peculiarities of revealed truth, but exert a salutary influence upon society, and manifest a most exemplary zeal in the cause of Christian Missions.

That Wesleyan Methodism has been of great advantage to the British nation, few persons, it is presumed, who are competently informed on the subject, will deny. "Sin is a reproach to any people ;" as well as the sure forerunner of confusion and ruin. Even law is comparatively powerless, however righteous it may be in principle, unless the consciences of the people are duly impressed with the obligations of religion and morality. When masters are tyrannical, and servants are perfidious ; when husbands and wives are faithless to each other ; when governors are careless of the public weal, and subjects are impatient of all restraint ; when the rich are selfish and overbearing, and the poor are envious and dishonest ; when, in the various relations of life, tradesmen and merchants are regardless of justice and truth ; when parents are neglectful of their children's welfare, and children despise and disobey their parents ; the people are, by a just retribution of Providence, ripe for destruction : and though it may for a season be delayed, yet its approach is swift and certain. Misery, in all its forms, personal, domestic, and national, is the inevitable fruit of abounding profligacy and wickedness. The dissolution of the great empires of antiquity is a fearful illustration of this truth.

To ascertain the amount of benefit which Great Britain has derived from Methodism, it will be requisite to advert to the events of the last century. At the beginning of that period, according to the testimony of unexceptionable witnesses, the elements of evil existed in frightful magnitude, and were in full operation. The higher classes were many of them infidel, and the poor were uneducated, ignorant, and grossly immoral. The influence of religion, to a great extent, was withdrawn; and, as the unavoidable consequence, sin prevailed in almost every diversity of form: for religion is the only basis of sound morality, and the only effectual restraint upon the passions and appetites of mankind. If men neither fear nor love God, it is vain to expect from them a faithful attention to the duties of life; for conscience has lost its power.

In the English nation thus circumstanced a vast increase of population was about to take place. Wealth, with all its incentives to luxury and indulgence, was on the point of being every where diffused. The factory system, congregating together large masses of people of both sexes, and placing them together in a heated atmosphere, was soon to be extensively introduced. The American war of independence, producing temporary scarcity and want, and inviting attention to the republican form of government, was at no great distance. Then followed the French Revolution, with its infidel democracy, and godless theories of social order, inflaming the popular mind, and endangering every national institution. Had this new state of things commenced while the elements of evil to which we have just adverted were in full and unrestrained operation, who can calculate the consequences? By the great mercy

of God, there was religious principle in the country to resist the evils which wealth, revolution, and war, were pouring forth in one mighty tide; but it was religious principle which, to a considerable extent, was consequent upon the rise of Methodism. What other agencies might have been called out in the various emergencies, to counteract the threatening evils, and secure the public welfare, had that form of Christianity which is denominated Methodism never appeared, we know not; nor does it become us to speculate upon such a subject. What God in his providence has done, we know; of what he might have done, we have no knowledge. In times of unexampled peril and excitement,—times which it is fearful even to think upon,—it pleased God to preserve this country in unimpaired strength by means of religious principle; and that principle, in a thousand instances, was created by the labours of the Wesleys, and in many others it was greatly raised and invigorated by the same means.

A more loyal man than John Wesley never existed. His loyalty was not a sentiment, or a prejudice, but a principle. It was identified with his Christianity. This is attested by his entire conduct, and by the numerous pamphlets which he published on subjects connected with the national interests. He succeeded in impressing the same character upon the societies that acknowledge him as their Founder. Amidst the disaffection which was produced by the French Revolution, and the pinchings of the protracted war, as well as under the terrors of the rampant Radicalism of a later period, the loyalty of the Methodist body was steadily maintained.

The following is an extract from the address of the Conference to the societies, in the year 1819,

published amidst the distress, the riots, and the disloyalty of that calamitous period:—"As many of you, to whom this measure of national suffering has been appointed, reside in places where attempts are making, by 'unreasonable and wicked men,' to render the privations of the poor the instruments of their own designs against the peace and the Government of our beloved country, we are affectionately anxious to guard all of you against being led astray from your civil and religious duties by their dangerous artifices. Remember, you are Christians, and are called by your profession to exemplify the power and influence of religion by your patience in suffering, and by 'living peaceably with all men.' Remember that you belong to a religious society, which has, from the beginning, explicitly recognised as high and essential parts of Christian duty, to 'fear God, and honour the King; to submit to Magistrates for conscience' sake, and not to speak evil of dignities.' You are surrounded with persons to whom these duties are objects of contempt and ridicule. Show your regard for them, because they are the doctrines of your Saviour. Abhor those publications in which they are assailed, along with every other doctrine of your holy religion: and judge of the spirit and objects of those who would deceive you into political parties and associations, by the vices of their lives, and the infidel malignity of their words and writings. 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?'

"Be it your care, beloved, who are exposed to this trial, to serve God in all good conscience; to preserve your minds from political agitations; to follow your occupations and duties in life, in peaceful seclusion from all strife and tumults: and God

will, in his own time, appear by his providence to your relief. We trust our country to his gracious favour, and doubt not that he will speak good concerning us." *

"Righteousness exalteth a nation;" and that righteousness is one of the direct fruits of the revival of religion, of which the two Wesleys were among the principal instruments, is matter of public notoriety. They are not Wesleyan Methodists whose names fill the criminal calendars at our Assizes, that figure in the police reports, that crowd the hulks, and are sent to our penal settlements. Cornwall, once a land of smugglers and "wreckers," and the terror of seamen, where Methodism has perhaps been embraced by a larger proportion of the community than in any other county, is now pronounced the most moral part of England. There is less crime in Cornwall, considering the number of the people, than in any other district of the land. And this is not a peculiar case. Wherever Wesleyan Methodism prevails, it secures the practice of a pure morality; and that, not through the operation of motives derived from expediency, or selfishness, but by implanting in the hearts of the people the fear and love of God, and placing them under the control of a holy and salutary discipline.

The effects of the Wesleyan doctrine and order upon families and individuals are equally beneficial. The people who receive this teaching are impressed with the truth, that "neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature;" and when this truth is realized, as it is in every penitent believer, "old things are passed away, and all things are become new." Ungodly companions

* Minutes of Conference, vol. v. pp. 62, 63.

and worldly amusements please no longer. The public-house and the noisy hilarity of profane men have no charms for a regenerated mind. Nothing is prized, but as it comes from God, and leads to him. The domestic relations are all sanctified. The husband and the wife, the parents and the children, are joined together by a tie far more tender, strong, and enduring, than that of nature. In heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but the children of God are there indissolubly one in him for ever. Hence their present intercourse with each other is carried on with a reference to their state of final blessedness. They read together, with reverent attention, God's inspired word. They pray together daily. The Sabbath, with its sacred joys and duties, is indeed holy and honourable; especially because of the opportunities which it brings for spiritual conversation, and for attendance upon the ordinances of God's house. Thousands of such families are, at this day, connected with the Wesleyan societies. Many of them are poor. Their clothing is mean, and their fare scanty. They know nothing of the elegances and refinements of life. With light and amusing literature they have little acquaintance. But they have the Bible, the incomparable hymns of the Wesleys, with a few other well-read books of spiritual instruction. The prosperity of religion at home, and the details of Missionary labour and success, inspire them with grateful emotion. The world knows them not, but they are known unto the Lord. When death parts them asunder, they sorrow not like those who have no hope, but meekly separate, in compliance with the Lord's will, under the cheerful assurance of again meeting in a land where there is neither death, nor grief, nor pain.

The breaking up of families has always been felt as one of the most bitter of those afflictions to which human nature is subjected on account of sin. The religion, therefore, which links them together in an eternal union, and thus, in fact, prevents their hearts from being rent asunder even by death, is a greater blessing than words can express.

“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that also which is to come.” Never, perhaps, was this scriptural declaration more strikingly illustrated than it has often been in the Wesleyan Connexion. The dormant mental powers of many a young man have been effectually roused by the force of his religious convictions; and the developement of those powers has excited the surprise of all who were previously acquainted with him. The personal godliness of which he has become a partaker has restrained him from evil company, from intemperance, and from every other kind of vice; and has invested him with a character of sobriety, industry, and uprightness. These have commanded confidence, and placed him first in offices of trust and responsibility, and then supplied him with the means of acquiring property, and of being a blessing to his whole neighbourhood. Some of the most substantial and honourable men of business in England have been members of the Wesleyan community; and their success in life hinged entirely upon those qualities which their religion supplied.

But it is with an especial reference to the spiritual interests of mankind that Methodism will ever be considered. And here we find matter of sincere congratulation. Since the commencement of this work, multitudes, far beyond what many persons

imagine, have, by God's blessing upon the Wesleyan doctrine and order, been not only reformed, and made decent and moral, but effectually turned to God through Christ. Their understandings have been enlightened by divine truth and grace; their consciences purged from dead works by an application of the blood of Christ; their hearts regenerated and sanctified; and their conduct rendered blameless and useful. They have become examples of holiness and devotion; and have lived the life of faith, and of happy intercourse with God. Piety has, to them, been a source of pure and elevated enjoyment under all the trials and sorrows of their earthly pilgrimage.

If there is a period when the true characters of men appear, it is that in which they anticipate a speedy removal into the world of spirits, and to "reap," through everlasting ages, according as they have "sown" during the present life. The strength of their attachment to earthly objects, their confidence in God, and submission to his will, are then put to the severest test. "A death-bed is a detector of the heart." To endure the pains of mortal sickness and actual dissolution, and the still severer pains of separation from connexions the most tender and endeared, and to enter upon an untried and endless state of existence,—not with the dogged firmness of a stoic, nor the profane and unnatural indifference of an infidel, but with calm resignation, with penitent, but unflinching confidence in the sacrifice, the power, the love, and the faithfulness of Christ, and in joyful hope of a blessed immortality through him,—is an object of the highest interest and importance; and one in which the power of Christianity was most blessedly seen in the early ages of the church. In this, too, we think, the nature and value of that

form of Christianity to which the name of "Methodism" is given, are strikingly seen. Some of the holiest and most sublime scenes the writer of these pages has ever witnessed, or ever expects to witness on this side of eternity, have been in the dying chambers of persons belonging to the Wesleyan body: some of them poor, and uneducated, except in religion; and others of them surrounded by every means of personal indulgence, and all the enjoyments of domestic life. The periodical and other publications of the Connexion have, from the beginning, borne ample testimony on this subject. To those who are enduring the pangs of bereavement, the consolation arising from the remembrance of the unfeigned piety and peaceful end of their departed friends, is of the most solid and durable kind, and mightily alleviates the anguish of separation. They weep; for "nature unreprieved" may drop her tears at the remembrance of the pious dead; but their tears of sorrow for those that sleep in Jesus are also tears of gratitude, of joy, and of hope.

How many human spirits are now in the heavenly paradise, brought thither by God's blessing upon the ministry of the Wesleys, and upon the plans which they adopted and sanctioned; and how many, in times to come, will be brought thither in connexion with those plans; are questions on which we have no right to speculate. They are among the "secret things" which "belong unto the Lord our God." They will, however, be disclosed when the Almighty Judge shall send forth his angels with the great sound of a trumpet, to gather together his elect from the four winds of heaven; and when pardoned and sanctified men shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south,

and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

There are persons who can see nothing in the ministry and success of the Wesleys, and of their fellow-labourers and successors, but unmixed and inexcusable evil. With such persons at present we will enter into no dispute. We think the conversion of men from misery and sin to holiness and peace, and the rescuing of myriads of deathless spirits from perdition, of greater moment than the maintenance of any mere system of church order whatever. Those who think otherwise are welcome to their own opinion. It is one which we are not inclined to adopt. To the members of the Wesleyan societies these pages are principally addressed; and we think that, on a review of the rise, progress, and present state of our community, at the conclusion of this the first century of our existence, united and grateful thanksgiving to God will be acknowledged as an appropriate, and indeed imperative, duty. In the autumn of the year 1839 the Centenary of Methodism will be celebrated; as it will then be just one hundred years since Mr. Wesley formed the first of the United Societies.

God forbid that in this celebration we should glory in man. If we do, we shall grieve the Holy Spirit, and bring a blight upon our work. God will "spread dung upon our faces," and spurn both us and our unhallowed services. He is jealous of his honour; and the glory which belongs to him he will not share with any other being, either in earth or heaven. The view of Methodistical agency and success which is presented in these pages is not intended to inspire pride and vain-glory, but to show the nature and extent of the benefit for which our thanks ought to

be presented to the God of all grace. The Wesleys, and their noble companion in evangelical labour, Mr. Whitefield, were indeed extraordinary men; but they were not men *casually* brought into existence, and whose powers were *casually* called forth by the circumstances of the times, as a profane and godless philosophy would insinuate. They were raised up by God, as the instruments of his mercy to the world. The peculiar talents with which they were endued were his gift. Their piety, their zeal for the divine glory, their yearning pity for ignorant and wicked men, their meek endurance of opposition, and their patience in toil and suffering, were all the effects of his holy inspiration. The whole of their success in turning men to Christ depended upon the exertion of the divine power; for no man can come to Christ unless he be drawn by the Father. The good that was in them was all of God; and whatever was in them of weakness, infirmity, error, and sin, was of themselves. While, therefore, we think upon our fathers in this work,—of the generations that have entered into rest through their labours,—of the tens of thousands in different parts of the world, who are following in the same path,—of the various agencies which are now employed to extend and perpetuate this work,—and of the cheering tokens of spiritual prosperity which we still witness,—let us beware of confining our attention to second causes. The hand of God is in all this; and the entire glory must be given to his infinite goodness. He is “great in counsel, and mighty in work.”

The manner in which this work has been carried on is worthy of especial observation. Luther gave it as his opinion, that revivals of religion rarely last more than one generation, or about thirty years.

But this has continued more than thrice that period, and presents no signs of general decay. When the two Wesleys were unable to meet the wants of the neglected population of this kingdom, and their brethren in the ministry almost every where refused to unite with them, it pleased God to raise up from among their own spiritual children the assistance that was needed. Nor has there ever been wanting, from that period to the present time, men suitably qualified to carry on this work in all its departments. Though no one man could supply the place of Mr. Wesley, yet several have been raised up to exemplify his principles, and carry out his plans into practical effect. Some of them have been particularly suited to labour in the Mission field ; others, to extend the work at home ; and others again, to give a right direction and character to the whole. Who that knows the history of the Connexion can forbear to thank God for the manly sense, the sound discretion, the unbending integrity, the deep religious experience, the governing wisdom of Alexander Mather ? the godly sincerity, the unaffected piety, the edifying and spiritual ministry of John Pawson ? the frank and generous spirit, the charming and effective eloquence of Samuel Bradburn ? the sound learning, the theological and biblical erudition, the powerful, awakening, and instructive ministry of Joseph Benson ? the unwearied diligence and application, the varied scholarship, the simple, argumentative, and energetic preaching of Adam Clarke ? the comprehensive intellect, the sublime conceptions, the rich and vigorous imagination, the unwearied Missionary zeal, the personal sanctity of Richard Watson ? These eminent men, with their equally devout and faithful, but less distinguished, brethren, devoted all

their talents and influence to this work ; and their labour has not been in vain in the Lord. The Christians at Jerusalem "glorified God in" St. Paul ; and we ought to follow their example with respect to the men whom he now qualifies to explain, enforce, and defend his truth, and especially those in the benefits of whose ministry we ourselves participate.

It is not an ordinary degree of gratitude that will suffice in this case. The benefits to be acknowledged are incalculably numerous, and momentous beyond all thought. Multitudes of people have been saved from sin and wrath. In several instances the elder branches of our families, our revered fathers and mothers, as well as we ourselves, have been of the number ; and it will be well for us individually to inquire, in the fear and in the presence of God, what, in all probability, would have been our situation, had it not been for that teaching by which we were turned "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God ;" as well as for the discipline under which we have been placed, and the spiritual helps with which we have been favoured as members of the Wesleyan society. That we might have been converted and saved by other means, is true ; but it is equally true that we were not. God, in the wise dispensations of his providence and grace, otherwise determined ; and for the means by which he was pleased to bring us to himself, our grateful offerings are justly due. "We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have declared unto us, the noble works which He did in their days, and in the old time before them." We ourselves have witnessed the same "works" in our own families and neighbourhoods, and have realized his operations in our own hearts. On the occasion, then, of the happy

Centenary which we are about to celebrate, while families and individuals shed tears of gratitude before the Lord, and present their thanksgivings to him "apart," let there be also in every place "a holy convocation to the Lord." Let "young men and maidens, old men and children, enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise." Let worldly business for the day be suspended, and nothing be thought of nor talked about but God, and his works of mercy. Let no heart remain unaffected, but every breast heave with holy emotion; and the voices of the assembled worshippers be lifted up like the noise of many waters. "Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee." Let self be every where annihilated, and the Lord alone exalted.

It is earnestly to be hoped that nothing of unhallowed exclusiveness, or bigotry, will be indulged on this joyful occasion. Myriads of people in the established Church of this country, and among the various classes of evangelical Dissenters, as well as in other lands, who "follow not with us," are nevertheless partakers with us of "like precious faith," as that by which we are saved from sin; and it is a part of our Christianity to cherish a spirit of universal love, and to hold communion with the true church of God, especially by prayer for them, and thanksgivings on their account. Ill would it become the spiritual children of John and Charles Wesley, two of as truly catholic men as ever existed, to raise the ungodly and fanatical cry, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are we!" to the exclusion of the other members of the great Christian family, in the midst of whom our Saviour dwells and walks. "Grace be

with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

It is recommended that the poor members of the Methodist societies should, on this festive occasion, receive of the bounty of the more affluent; and that the same favour should be extended to Sunday-schools, and other children belonging to our schools. Thus Ezra directed the Jews, when they rejoiced at the reading of the law, to "send portions unto them for whom nothing was prepared," as an expression of thanksgiving to God. When these intelligent children inquire, "What mean ye by this service?" let their teachers and parents tell them, that one hundred years ago, when ignorance and sin overspread this land, it pleased God to raise up a small number of good and faithful men, who went through the country, warning the people, and calling them to repentance; that thousands took the warning; that, as the consequence of the revival of religion, which thus began, England is now filled with Bibles, and Sunday-schools, and places of worship; that multitudes of people have died in the Lord, and gone to heaven, since this work was commenced; and that, on the other side of the world, where Missionaries are labouring, children are assembled in schools by thousands, and old people with spectacles are learning to read the Scriptures. Thus let these "little ones" be invited to join in the hymn of praise, and cry hosanna to Him who is at once David's Son and David's Lord.

The truest respect that can be shown to the memory of the Wesleys is to imitate their piety and zeal, and thus to follow them as they followed Christ. While celebrating the intended Centenary, we shall be unavoidably led to think of the manner

in which they preached, and prayed, and strove to save souls from death, and of the motives and feelings by which they were actuated in their self-denying and exhausting labours; and happy will it be if we should catch the same spirit. And indeed why should we not? They were made what they were by the anointing of the Holy One which was upon them; and the same prayer of faith will bring upon us an unction equally rich and sanctifying. The present times are somewhat different from those in which these men of God lived; but the duties of both are substantially the same: and we have never known a period when there was a greater need of that plain, faithful, and rousing ministry, of which the Wesleys set the example, than there is at this day. True evangelical preaching is not to be attained by a superficial acquaintance with the mere elements of divine truth, nor does it consist in the endless repetition of favourite phrases; but in a sound and faithful exposition of God's own word, and an application of it to the understandings and hearts of the people. Greatly is this wanted. Mammon is still the god of a large proportion of our men of business. It cannot perhaps be said that a godless philosophy is a leading characteristic of our literary and scientific men; but in a majority of cases philosophy is separated from revealed truth. Never was so much attention paid to "natural theology;" but some of the men who make the greatest noise on this subject, by their silence concerning the Bible, which contains the principles of all that is really valuable in their speculations, too strongly intimate that they have no faith in that holy and inspired book. Mighty efforts are now made, especially by means of the press, to circulate what is called "use-

ful knowledge ;" but in the publications which are sent forth avowedly for this purpose, the doctrine of "Christ crucified" is not found. This is a sufficiently obvious intimation that there is, in the estimation of the parties concerned, no real "use" in this "knowledge," even though St. Paul prized it above every other, and preached it to both Jew and Gentile as the most important of all acquirements.

In the manufacturing districts, and some of the large provincial towns, infidelity, in a form more malignant and diabolical than it ever previously assumed in England, is making rapid progress. Every effort is tried, not only to alienate the popular mind from all faith in the revelation which God has made, but to establish principles subversive of all morality, and of all domestic and social order. The rights of property, and the perpetuity of the marriage relation, are peremptorily denied ; and the worst passions of our fallen nature are freed from all effectual restraint, by a denial of the moral government of God. Presumptuous and bad men propose to introduce a new order of society, without religion, without morality, without God. In many places they are labouring with all their might to corrupt the children and youth of our land, by instilling into their minds the worst principles, and by urging them to the actual perpetration of the foulest deeds.

The attempts which are now made to revive the interests of Popery in Great Britain are more strenuous and extended than those of any former period since the Reformation. Romish places of worship, and several of them imposing by the magnificence of their architecture, are rising in almost all parts of the land. Schools are opened and gratuitous education is offered to Protestant children, for the purpose

of training them in the old idolatry and superstition. In some parts of the country, Priests are going from house to house among the peasantry, to bring them back to the Church of Rome. In the first instance, they refuse to converse with the people on the subject of religion at all. They visit them merely as friends; and offer little accommodations to such as may be suffering from affliction. When suspicion is removed, and confidence in some degree gained, the peculiarities of Popery are gradually introduced and recommended. Their "coming," as St. Paul expresses it, is "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness."

Under present circumstances, there is no room for the slightest relaxation of effort in any section of the Protestant community. It becomes the Wesleyan body especially, in common with all who value the Reformation and the pure doctrines of Christianity, to redouble their exertions to preserve the people of England from the corrupt leaven and secular dominion of Papal Rome. This may be done by a more general distribution of the holy Scriptures; for Popery can never succeed among a people that pray, and that study the Bible. It withers to the very roots under the direct rays of revealed truth. By preaching justification by faith, Luther shook the Papal throne; and by the same means the Protestant Churches of England have been raised into new life. Mr. Wesley did not attempt to guard the people against some particular errors and vices merely, but against these evils in every form; and he secured this by instrumentally making them Christians. He declared to them the entire sinfulness of their nature, the fearful amount of their guilt, and their continual exposure to the miseries of hell. Having

succeeded in convincing them of sin, and in bringing them to repentance, he directed them to Christ as their Saviour, and encouraged them to believe in him with the heart unto righteousness. Thus believing, the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which was given unto them. They were made both happy and holy; and while they held fast their confidence, it was in vain that the abettors of error tried to perplex them, by saying, "Lo, Christ is here!" or, "Lo, Christ is there!" They felt him to be within them the hope of glory; and hence arose their stability.

With nothing short of this should we ever be contented. This will preserve the people effectually against the sorceries of Rome, come from what quarter they may; and, above all, it will prepare them to die in peace, and to enter into heaven.

The Centenary will afford a suitable opportunity for the entire body of Wesleyan Methodists, both Ministers and societies, to bind themselves afresh to God and to one another, in the steadfast purpose that they will more earnestly than ever aspire to the full possession of the mind that was in Christ, and labour to bring all around them into the same state of purity and spiritual enjoyment. Mr. Wesley declared himself to be sick of opinions, of idle controversies, and of the strife of words. He loathed this frothy food, and called for Christian godliness in its life and power. Neither with respect to himself, nor those that heard him, would he be satisfied with anything less than the holy, happy love of God and man springing from a sense of God's mercy in Christ, and expressing itself in all piety, righteousness, benevolence, and truth. Those who live without this fall short of the great end for which they were

created and redeemed, and will through everlasting ages lament their sin and folly. Many persons professing Christian godliness, and some of them even sustaining the sacred office, are wasting their lives and destroying their influence by the eager pursuit of political objects of very doubtful character. "Let the dead bury their dead: go thou and preach the kingdom of God." The conversion of men to Christ must be the one object of our ministry, of our plans of education, of our Missionary exertions, and, indeed, of all our proceedings.

To strengthen the various institutions of Wesleyan Methodism, and thus render the efforts of the Connexion to spread true religion, both at home and abroad, still more extended and effective, it is intended to connect the devotional acts of the Centenary with pecuniary contributions. The more wealthy of our people throughout the land have enrolled their names, and specified the amount of their intended donations. Such a display of Christian liberality was never before witnessed in the Wesleyan body. The largeness of the sums has indeed excited general observation. The less wealthy of our societies and congregations, and even the poor, must also have an opportunity of showing their good-will to the cause; and it may be hoped that the aggregate will be worthy of the occasion,—a becoming expression of gratitude for benefits already received, and of zeal for the extension of the same benefits to the ends of the earth.

THE END.



