

John Wesley - Evangelist: Chapter 3

Oxford: University Life

Of this time Wesley writes, 'In the year 1729, I began not only to read, but to study the Bible, as the one, the only standard of truth, and the only model of pure religion. Hence I saw, in a clearer and clearer light, the indispensable necessity of having the mind which was in Christ, and of walking as Christ also walked; even of having, not some part only, but all the mind which was in Him; and of walking as He walked, not only in many or in most respects, but in all things. And this was the light, wherein at this time I generally considered religion, as a uniform following of Christ, an entire inward and outward conformity to our Master. Nor was I afraid of anything more, than of bending this rule to the experience of myself, or of other men; of allowing myself in any way the least disconformity to our grand Exemplar.'

In obedience to the summons he had received from Dr. Morley, Rector of Lincoln College, Wadelt returned to Oxford to take pupils, eleven of whom were at once placed under his care. Here he found a nascent Methodist society, though as yet without the definite name, consisting of Charles and two companions, to whom he immediately joined himself, and by whom he was speedily recognized as their spiritual leader. Under his guidance the little community soon became the instrument of a spiritual propaganda, and gradually increased in number and influence—a little seed that afterwards was to become a great tree.

In his Short History of Methodism, published some years afterwards, 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. Kirkham, 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 173a 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 Brazen-nose, with two or three of his pupils. About the same time Mr. James Hervey was permitted to meet with them, and, in 1735; Mr. Whitefield.' He says, 'They were all zealous members of the Church of England; not only tenacious of all her doctrines, so far as they knew them, but of all her discipline, to the minutest circumstance. They were likewise zealous observers of all the University statutes, and that for conscience' sake. But they observed neither these nor anything else further than they conceived it was bound upon them by their one book, the Bible; it being their one desire and design to be downright Bible-Christians; taking the Bible, as interpreted by the primitive Church and our own, for their own and sole rule.'

This was the 'Holy Club,' of which Wesley was by the wits dubbed the Curator. These were the 'Bible-bigots,' the 'Bible-moths' who, their deriders said, fed upon the Bible, as moths do upon cloth; and against whom were directed the gibes and jeers of the careless. But the opposition of the worldly spirits by whom they were surrounded did not hinder them in their high purpose, while it made more obvious their courage and singleness of aim. They did not confine their attention, each man, to his own soul, or generally to the welfare of the little community or club, but they sought to rescue other young students from evil courses, and to lead them to a religious life; they visited the prison and the castle, where they read prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, and administered the Sacrament once a month; they raised money, and procured books, medicines, and other requirements for poor prisoners; they visited and helped poor families, and they taught in schools and in the workhouse. In all this Wesley took the lead. He himself founded one of the schools, paid the mistress, and clothed some, if not all, of the children. When preaching on Dress many years after, he tells that, while he was at Oxford, '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 that 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 just 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"" Thus he urged upon his hearers not to 'lay out on nothing, yea, worse than nothing, what may clothe your poor, naked, shivering fellow-creature.' And on another occasion, when preaching on The More Excellent Way, he exhorts, 'First, if you have no family, after you have provided for yourself, give away all that remains. This, he says, was the practice of all the young men at Oxford who were called Methodists. For example, one of them [himself] had thirty pounds a year; he lived on twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year, receiving

sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away thirty-two. The third year, he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received one hundred and twenty pounds. Still he lived, as before, on twenty-eight, and gave to the poor ninety-two, Was not this a more excellent way.

Thus in works of benevolence and Christian service, in the midst of abounding wickedness, these young men lived in purity of life, strengthening each other's faith and godly practice, living as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, in the midst of a truly crooked and perverse generation. But this outward zeal was not maintained without the most diligent religious exercises. The rigorous watchfulness which Wesley kept over himself at this' time, and the strenuous efforts he made to promote his spiritual progress, are strikingly exhibited in A Scheme of Self-Examination, which he tells us was used by the first Methodists in Oxford, and which was undoubtedly his compilation. The document is extremely interesting, not only as showing the inner life of the little Methodist community,

but, here particularly, as throwing light on the severe system of self-discipline which Wesley was accustomed to carry out, with the most rigorous precision, upon himself, and which he urged upon others.

A SCHEME OF SELF-EXAMINATION USED BY THE FIRST METHODISTS IN OXFORD.

Sunday.—Love of God and Simplicity: Means of which are

Prayer and Meditation.

1. Have I been simple and recollected in everything I said or did Have I (I) been simple in everything, that is, looked upon God, my Good, my Pattern, my one Desire, my Disposer, Parent of Good; acted wholly for Him; bounded my views with the present action or hour (2) Recollected that is, has this simple v/ew been distinct and uninterrupted Have I, in order to keep it so, used the signs agreed upon With my friends, wherever I was Have I done anything without a previous perception of its being the will of God Or without a perception of its being an exercise or a means of the virtue of the day Have I said anything without it

2. Have I prayed with fervour at going in and out of church in the church morning and evening in private Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, with my friends, at rising before lying down on Saturday noon all the time I am engaged in exterior work in private before I go into the place of public or private prayer, for help therein Have I, wherever I was, gone to church morning and evening, unless for necessary mercy and spent from one hour to three in private Have I, in private prayer, frequently stopped short and observed what fervour Have I repeated it over and over, till I adverted to every word Have I at the beginning of every prayer or paragraph owned I cannot pray Have I paused before I concluded in His name, and adverted to my Saviour now interceding for me at the right hand of God, and offering up these prayers

3. Have I duly used ejaculations that is, have I every hour Prayed for humility, faith, hope, love, and the particular virtue of the day Considered with whom I was the last hour, what I did, and how with regard to recollection, love of man, humility, self-denial, resignation, thankfulness considered the next hour in the same respects, offered up all I do to my Redeemer, begged his assistance in every particular, and commended my soul to His keeping Have I done this deliberately, not in haste, seriously, not doing anything else the while, and fervently as I could

4. Have I duly prayed for the virtue of the day that is, have I prayed for it at going out and coming in deliberately, seriously, fervently

5. Have I used a Collect at nine, twelve, and three and grace before and after eating aloud at my own room deliberately, seriously, Fervently

6. Have I duly meditated every day, unless for necessary mercy, (1) From six, etc., to prayers (2) From four to five What was particular in the providence of this day How ought the virtue of the day to have been exerted upon it How did it fall short (Here faults.) (3) On Sunday, from six to seven, with Kempis from three to four on redemption, or God's attributes Wednesday and Friday, from twelve to one, on the Passion after ending a book, on what I had marked in it

Monday.—Love of Man.

1. Have I been zealous to do, and active in doing, good that is,

(1) Have I embraced every probable opportunity of doing good, and preventing, removing, or lessening evil

(2) Have I pursued it with my might

(3) Have I thought any thing too dear to part with, to serve my neighbor

(4) Have I spent an hour at least every day in speaking to some one or other

(5) Have I given any one up till he expressly renounced me

(6) Have I, before I spoke to any, learned, as far as I could, his temper, way of thinking, past life, and peculiar hindrance internal and external fixed the point to be aimed at then the means to it

(7) Have I in speaking proposed the motives, then the difficulties, then balanced them, then exhorted him to consider both calmly and deeply, and to pray earnestly for help

(8) Have I in speaking to a stranger explained what religion is not (not negative, not external) and what it is (a recovery of the image of God) searched at what Step in it he Stops, and what makes him stop there exhorted and directed him

(9) Have I persuaded all I could to attend public prayers, sermons and sacraments, and, in general, to obey the laws of the Church Catholic, the Church of England, the State, the University and their respective colleges

(10) Have I, when taxed with any act of disobedience avowed it, and turned the attack with sweetness and firing.

(11) Have I disputed upon any practical point, unless it was to be practised just then

(12) Have I, in disputing,

(i.) Desired him to define the terms of the question; to limit it; what he grants, what denies

(ii.) Delayed speaking opinion let him explain and prove his then insinuated and pressed objections

(13) Have I after every visit asked him who went with me, 'Did I say anything wrong'

(14) Have I, when any one asked advice, directed and exhorted him with all my power

2. Have I rejoiced with and for my neighbour in virtue or pleasure grieved with him in pain, for him in sin

3. Have I received his infirmities with pity, not anger

4. Have I thought or spoke unkindly of or to him Have I revealed any evil of any one, unless it was necessary to some particular good I had in view Have I then done it with all the tenderness of phrase and manner consistent with that end Have I anyway appeared to approve them that did otherwise

5. Has goodwill been, and appeared to be, the spring of all my actions towards others

6. Have I duly used intercession

(1) Before,

(2) After, speaking to any

(3) For my friends on Sunday

(4) For my pupils on Monday

(5) For those; who have particularly desired it, on Wednesday and Friday

(6) For the family in which I am, every day

A letter from one of Wesley's intimate fellow-collegians, Robert Kirkham, one of the first band of Oxford Methodists, throws a new light upon Wesley's sentiments at this time. Wesley had already visited Kirkham at his home in Stanton, Gloucestershire, and had been received as a welcome guest. Here he had made the acquaintance of Kirkham's sister Betty, and seems to have been impressed by her charms; nor was she indifferent to the personal attractions of Wesley. This did not escape the notice of her brother. Writing to Wesley, Kirkham says :—

'February 2, 1727.

'Your most deserving, queer character, your worthy personal accomplishments, your noble endowments of mind, your little and handsome person, and your obliging and desirable conversation, have been the pleasing subject of our discourse for some pleasant hours. You have often been in the thoughts of M.B. [Miss Betty], which I have curiously observed, when with her alone, by inward smiles and sighs and abrupt expressions concerning you. Shall this suffice I caught her this morning in an humble and devout posture on her knees.... I long for the time when you are to supply my father's absence. Keep your counsel and burn this when perused. You shall have my reasons in my next. I must conclude, and subscribe myself, your most affectionate friend, and brother I wish I might write,

'ROBERT KIRKHAM.'

Wesley's sister Martha seems to have been aware of his tender sentiments, for, in a letter of near the same date, she says, 'When I

knew that you were just returned from Worcestershire, where I suppose you saw your Varanese [a fictitious and fancy name for Miss Kirkham, used according to a custom of the time], I then ceased to wonder at your silence, for the sight of such a woman, "so known, so loved," might well make you forget me. I really have myself a vast respect for her, as I must necessarily have for one that is so dear to you.'

A subsequent correspondence, with Mrs. Pendarves, shows that Wesley then retained his passion for Varanese, and that it was not his fault that it did not lead to a life-long union. For more than three years Wesley kept up a correspondence with Miss Betty Kirkham, and spoke of her in the tenderest terms; but in 1731 their friendship was interrupted, whether by her father's interference, or by her own preference for another, is not determined. It seems probable that she married a Mr. Wilson, and died in the year 1732.

Wesley's intimacy with Miss Betty Kirkham led to his acquaintance with her sister's friend, Mrs. Pendarves, the elder daughter of Bernard Granville, and niece of Lord Lansdowne. She had married early—at the age of seventeen—and was left a widow when she was twenty-three. She was opulent, talented, accomplished, beautiful, a brilliant lady of the Court, familiar with all that rank and fashion could display; yet is said to have been sweet and modest, intelligent and inquiring; as happy in country life as if she had never known a Court or shone in the assemblies of London; as of the assembly and the opera were altogether strange to her; and, above all, she was interested and concerned about matters of religious devotion and duty. It is no wonder if the young collegian, with a mind open to every charm of refinement and goodness, as well as to every grace of person, was altogether dazzled and subdued.

Wesley and Mrs. Pendarves corresponded freely; he under the pseudonym of Cyrus, she of Aspasia. Several of the letters are given in Lady Llanover's Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany. Dr. Rigg, who had had the opportunity of examining the whole of the correspondence, says, 'In all other correspondence, before as well as after this period of his life, Wesley is always clear, neat, and parsimonious of words; simple, chaste, and unaffected. In this correspondence, on the contrary, he is stilted, sentimental, I had almost said affected, certainly unreal, and at times fulsome, when he has to speak of the lady herself, or attempts to turn a compliment. One almost wonders how the lady, who never forgets herself, and whose style is always natural and proper, was able to bear the style in which he addressed her. It is only when a question of religious casuistry, or of theology, or of duty, or of devotion, is to be dealt with, that Wesley is himself again; then his style is singularly in contrast with what it is in respect to points of personality or of sentiment, His expressions of regard and admiration are as high-flown as if they belonged to a Spanish romance; his discussions are clear and close. It is hard to understand how the same man could be: the writer of all these letters.'

This correspondence appears to have been continued up to August, 1731, when Mrs. Pendarves went to reside in Ireland; and though it is probable Wesley wrote to her more than once after that time, yet she did not write to him until, after an interval of three years, she had returned to England. Then it was too late. During those years Wesley had advanced greatly in character and in serious devotion to the lofty aims of his calling, and had gained a higher and a wider influence as a spiritual leader and guide. Dr. Rigg pertinently remarks, that, 'in addition to the curious interest of this correspondence, it reveals a background of natural character which enables us to see in a much truer light the matured, and in good part transformed, Wesley of later years. It reveals to us the extreme natural susceptibility of Wesley to whatever was graceful and amiable in woman, especially if united to mental vigour and moral excellence.... He was naturally a woman-worshipper—at least a worshipper of such women. An almost reverent courtesy, a warm but pure affection, a delicate but close familiarity, marked through life his relations with the good and gifted women—gifted they were for the most part—with whom he maintained friendship and correspondence.'

But, with Wesley's future life in view, this episode affords ground for reflecting on the wonderful controlling providence which then, and not then only, prevented a life destined for heroic self-denial, and for almost unequalled labour in the service of the Church and the race, from contenting itself with the limitations of the ordinary, even though in his case the distinguished, career of the parish clergyman or the college don.

Returning to our history, we find that, at the beginning of the year 1730, Wesley accepted for some months a curacy eight miles from Oxford, probably at Stanton Harcourt, where his friend Gambold was afterwards the incumbent. It was not far from South Leigh, where Wesley had preached his first sermon. Thither he rode on Sundays, but what other service he rendered is not known. He received payment at the rate of 30 per year. This curacy afforded him a new field of usefulness, and enabled him to retain his horse without abridging his charities.

In the spring of the following year he began to observe the Wednesday 'and Friday fasts, after the practice of the early Church, tasting no food till three in the afternoon. He tells us that he strove diligently against all sin; omitted no sort of self-denial that he thought lawful; carefully using, both in public and in private, all the means of grace at all opportunities. He omitted no occasion of doing good, and for that reason, he says, he suffered evil. But, knowing all this to be nothing, unless it was directed toward inward holiness, he aimed continually at attaining the image of God, by doing God's will and not his own.

At this time he and his brother began the practice of conversing in Latin when they were alone; a practice they continued through life. In the spring of this year they paid a visit to Epworth, remaining there three weeks. They walked there and back, discovering that four or five and twenty miles is an easy and safe day's journey in hot weather, as well as cold; and that it was easy to read as they walked, for a

distance of ten or a dozen miles, without feeling either faint or weary; and on their return Wesley tells his mother that the motion and sun together, in their last hundred and fifty miles' walk, so thoroughly carried off all their 'superfluous humours' that they continued in perfect health, though the season in Oxford was a very sickly one; and, as many thought he and his brother were too strict, and laid burdens on themselves which they were not able to bear, he begs that, if she judged them to be too superstitious or enthusiastic on the one hand, or too remiss on the other, she would inform them as speedily as possible. And, writing to his father at the same time, he says, ' Since our return our little company that used to meet us on a Sunday morning is shrunk into almost none at all. Mr. Morgan is sick at Holt; Mr. Boyce is at his father's at Barton; Mr. Kirkham must shortly leave Oxford; and a young gentleman who used to make a fourth, either afraid or ashamed, or both, is returned to the ways of the world, and studiously shuns our company.' But though he narrates the fact he uses no word signifying any discouragement on his part. Indeed, such a sentiment, so entirely unheard in after life, when there was so much to occasion it, seems not to find place even at this early period. ' However,' he adds, 'the poor at the castle had the Gospel preached to them, and some of their wants supplied, and the children were still cared for.'

Amongst the interesting letters written by him to his ever-wise counsellor, his mother, is one bearing date February 28, 1732. She had said, 'I own I never understood by the real presence more than that the Divine nature of Christ is then eminently present to impart, by the operation of His Spirit, the benefit of His death to worthy receivers.' He replied, 'One consideration is enough to make me assent to your judgment concerning the Holy Sacrament, which is, that we cannot allow Christ's human nature to be present in it, without allowing either CON- or TRANS-substantiation. But that His divinity is so united to us then, as He never is but to worthy receivers, I firmly believe, though the manner of that union is utterly a mystery to me.' Speaking of his many spiritual privileges, he asks, 'What shall I do to make all these blessings effectual, to gain from them that mind which was also in Christ Jesus To all who give signs, of their not being strangers to it, I propose this question-and why not to you rather than any Shall I quite break off my pursuit of all learning, but what immediately tends to practice I once desired to make a fair show in languages and philosophy; but it is past. There is a more excellent way, and if I cannot attain to any progress in the one, without throwing up all thoughts of the other, why, fare it well I Yet a little while, and we shall all be equal in knowledge, if we are in virtue. You say you "have renounced the world." And what have I been doing all this time What have I done ever since I was born Why, I have been plunging myself into it more and more. It is enough; "Awake, thou that sleepest." Is there not "one Lord, one Spirit, one hope of our calling " One way of obtaining that hope Then I am to renounce the world as well as you. This is the very thing I want to do—to draw off my affections from this world, and fix them on a better, But how What is the surest and the shortest way Is it not to be humble Surely this is a large step in the way. But the question recurs, How am I to do this To own the necessity of it is not to be humble. In many things you have interceded for me and prevailed, Who knows but in this too you may be successful!

These words show with what eagerness he was striving after holiness; they exhibit his docile and teachable spirit; and they indicate the kind of self-discipline to which he was bending himself—a discipline carried on within the quiet enclosure of University life, that so well helped to prepare him for the outward struggles yet to come.

Being in London in the July of this year, Wesley made the acquaintance of William Law, who was then living with Gibbons at Putney, and began to read the mystic writers. This, as we shall see, ultimately added another element to his complex experience, involving fresh perplexities to be resolved, and fresh conflicts to be endured. On November 23, 1736, he wrote to Samuel Wesley, 'I think the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of the faith was the writings of the mystics; under which term I comprehend all, and only those, who slight any of the means of grace.' He also became known to many members of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, with whose aims he most entirely sympathized. He was admitted to the Society on August 3 of this year.

On August 26, Mr. Morgan died. He was one of the three who were the first to be dubbed Supererogation men and Methodists. As false reports were spread abroad that his death had been occasioned by the excessive fasting and other austerities which the Wesleys had induced him to practise, Wesley wrote a long letter to Morgan's father, giving some account of his son's Christian character and charitable works, and of the general proceedings of their little company.

This so far satisfied Mr. Morgan that he subsequently placed his younger son as a pupil under the care of Charles Wesley. In the preface to his published Journals, Wesley inserted this letter as 'a plain account of the rise of that little society which had been so variously represented.'

During the course of this summer Wesley made two journeys to Epworth. In the first, while he was standing on the garden wall at a friend's house, it fell flat under him, but he escaped unhurt. His second journey was an affecting one. As his father was growing old and infirm, and his brother Samuel was about to reside in Tiverton, it was not probable that all the family would ever gather together again within the walls of that old parsonage at Epworth—the home of the gifted and honoured family whose name was to become familiar to English-speaking races in every corner of the habitable globe; the home to which the thoughts of so many in after generations would turn, and to which the steps of so many pilgrims from this land and from over the seas would wander.

On the first day of this year, 1733, Wesley preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, before the University, on 'The Circumcision of the Heart,' from Rom. ii. 29. Writing to a friend thirty years after, he says, 'The sermon contains all that I now teach concerning salvation for all sin, and loving God with an undivided heart.' But on one topic it did not teach all that he afterwards taught. On the subject of faith it lacked the

teaching that Wesley at that time himself lacked. He defines faith to be 'an unshaken assent to all that God hath revealed in Scripture, and in particular to those important truths, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; He bare our sins in His own body on the tree; He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' But when he afterwards published the sermon, in 1748, in the second of his first four volumes of sermons, he added the following remarkable passage: ('not only an unshaken assent,' etc.) 'but likewise the revelation of Christ in our hearts; a divine evidence or conviction of His love, His free, unmerited love to me a sinner; a sure confidence in His pardoning mercy, wrought in us by the Holy Ghost; a confidence whereby every true believer is enabled to hear witness. I know that my redeemer liveth; that I have an Advocate with the Father, and that Jesus Christ the righteous is my Lord, and the propitiation for MY sins. I know He hath loved. He hath reconciled me, even me to God; and I have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.' It will presently be seen how closely similar these words are to those used by him, as he recorded his faith after the memorable meeting in Aldersgate Street, at which he first grasped the truth of his personal and individual interest in Christ's atonement; that event being the dividing line between, 'He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world and 'He is the propitiation for my sins.'

This year was signalized by his printing ('the first time I ventured to print anything') A Collection of Forms of Prayer, designed for the use of his pupils. Thus began that prolific literary labour which was continued to the end of his day, and which none of his toils abated. The number and variety of his publications astonishes every student of his life.

His father being in a bad state of health and apparently declining rapidly, Wesley repaired to Epworth. Passing over the bridge at Daventry, his horse fell over it with him; but he escaped unhurt, and, as so often afterwards, found occasion for thankfulness to God because of preservation in imminent danger. His parents were very anxious that he should be settled at Epworth in case of his father's death. After his return to Oxford he wrote to his mother, 'You observed when I was with you, that I was very indifferent as to the having or not having the living of Epworth. I was indeed utterly unable to determine either way; and that for this reason: I know, if I could stand my ground here, and approve myself a faithful minister, of our blessed Jesus, by honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report; then there would not be a place under the heaven like this for improvement in every good,' And again, 'I have as many pupils as I need, and as many friends; when more are better for me, I shall have more. If I have no more pupils after these are gone from me, I shall then be glad of a curacy near You; if I have, I shall take it as a signal that I am to remain here,"

In May he again set out for Epworth, calling at Manchester upon his friend Clayton, who had now left the University. On his return to Oxford he saw the bad effects of his absence upon his pupils and the members of their little society. He now found himself surrounded by enemies, triumphing over him, while friends were deserting him; and he saw the fruits of his labours in danger of being blasted before they had reached maturity. But he stood firm as a rock, and being conscious of his own integrity, and that he had nothing in view but to serve God and benefit his neighbours, he viewed his situation with calmness, and in the simplicity of his heart wrote thus to his father :

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'June 13, 1733.

'The effects of my last journey, I believe, will make me more cautious of staying any time from Oxford for the future; at least till I have no pupils to take care of, which probably will be within a year or two, One of my young gentlemen told me at my return, that he was' more and more afraid of singularity; another, that he had read an excellent piece of Mr. Locke's, which had convinced him of the mischief of regarding authority. Both of them agreed, that the observing of Wednesday as a fast was an unnecessary singularity; the Catholic Church (that is, the majority of it) having long since repealed, by contrary custom, the injunction she formerly gave concerning it. A third, who could not yield to this argument, has been convinced by a fever, and Dr. Frewin. Our seven and twenty communicants at St. Mary's were on Monday shrunk to five; and, the day before, the last of Mr. Clayton's pupils who continued with us, informed me, that he did not design to meet us any more.

'My ill success, as they call it, seems to be what has frightened every one away from a falling house.'

He now redoubled his diligence with his pupils, that they might recover the ground they had lost. He had been blamed both by friends and enemies for his singularity, and for some particular practices which he observed. Writing to his mother on these matters, he reveals his thoughts and methods. He says, August 17, 1733, 'The thing that gives offence here is the being singular with regard to time, expense, and company. This is evident beyond exception, from the case of Mr. Smith, one of our Fellows, who no sooner began to husband his time, to retrench unnecessary expenses, and to avoid his irreligious acquaintance, but he was set upon, by not only all those acquaintance, but many others too, as if he had entered into a conspiracy to cut all their throats; though to this day he has not advised any single person, unless in a word or two and by accident, to act as he did in any of these instances.' He adds:

'It is true indeed, that "the devil hates offensive war most;" and that whoever tries to rescue more than his own soul from his hands will have more enemies, and meet with greater opposition, than if he was content with "having his own life for a prey." That I try to do this is likewise certain; but I cannot say whether I "rigorously impose any observances on others," till I know what that phrase means. What I do is this: When I am entrusted with a person who is first to understand and practise, and then to teach, the law of Christ, I endeavour, by an intermixture of reading and conversation, to show him what that law is; that is, to renounce all inordinate love of the world, and to love and obey God with all his strength. When he appears seriously sensible of this, I propose to him the means God hath commanded

him to use, in order to that end; and a week, or a month, or a year after, as the state of his soul seems to require it, the several prudential means recommended by wise and good men. As to the times, order, measure, and manner wherein these are to be proposed, I depend upon the Holy Spirit to direct me, in and by my own experience and reflection, joined to the advices of my religious friends here and elsewhere. Only two rules it is my principle to observe in all cases: First, to begin, continue, and end all my advices in the spirit of meekness; as knowing that "the wrath," or severity, "of man worketh not the righteousness of God;" and, secondly, to add to meekness, long-suffering; in pursuance of a rule which I fixed long since — never to give up any one till I have tried him, at least ten years — How long hath God had pity on thee

Truly Wesley was preparing himself to be a great leader of men.

Tyerman observes, 'Methodism at Oxford was organized in 1729. Two Years after, while 'Wesley and his brother were at' Epworth it, dwindled into almost nothing; and two yeas later still, when it had increased to seven and twenty communicants, during another brief Epworth visit it was almost utterly destroyed, for the seven and twenty were reduced to five. All this goes to show that Wesley was the soul of this movement, and that without him it would have been dissolved and become extinct. . . . The five poor Methodists remaining, not reckoning Wesley himself, were doubtless Charles Wesley, Benjamin Ingham, James Hervey, John Gambold, and, probably, Charles Kinchin. All honour to such names ! They kept the fire burning when it was in danger of going out. Wesley was their master-spirit; but they were faithful and willing co-workers.'

A more exact picture of Wesley and his methods, and of the little band of Methodists at this tithe, than that furnished in a letter of Gambold's, one of themselves, cannot be given, It is too precise and exact in its details to be omitted, notwithstanding its length. Gambold writes:

'Mr. Wesley, late of Lincoln College, has been the instrument of so much good to me, that I shall never forget him. Could I remember him as I ought, it would have very near the same effect as if he was still present; for a conversation so unreserved as was his, so zealous in engaging his friends to every instance of Christian piety, has left nothing to be Said, but what occurs to us as often as we are disposed to remember him impartially.

'About the middle of March, 1730, I became acquainted with Mr. Charles Wesley of Christ Church. I was just then come up from the country, and had made a resolution, to find out some pious persons of religion to keep company with, or else to instil something of it into those I knew already. I had been for two years before in deep melancholy; so God was pleased to order it, to disappoint and break a proud spirit, and to embitter the world to me; as I was inclining to relish its vanities. During this time I had no friend to whom I could open my mind, to any purpose. No man did care for my Soul; or none, at least, understood its paths. They that were at ease could not guess what my sorrow was for. The learned endeavoured to give me right notions, and the friendly to divert me. But I had a weight upon my heart, which only prayer could in some degree remove. I prepared myself to make trial of the value and comfort of society, being a little recovered. One day an old acquaintance entertained me with some reflections on the whimsical Mr. Wesley, his preciseness and pious extravagances. Though I had lived with him four years in the same college, yet so unable was I to take notice of anything that passed, that I knew nothing of his character; but upon hearing this, I suspected he might be a good Christian. I therefore went to his room, and, without any ceremony, desired the benefit of his conversation. I had so large a share of it henceforth, that hardly a day passed, while I was at college, but we were together once, if not oftener.

'After some time he introduced me to his brother John, of Lincoln College. "For," said he, "he is somewhat older than I, and can resolve your doubts better." This, as I found afterwards, was a thing which he was deeply sensible of; for I never observed any person have a more real reference for another, than he constantly had for his brother. Indeed, he followed his brother entirely. Could I describe one of them, I should describe both. And therefore I shall say no more of Charles, but that he was a man made for friendship; who, by his cheerfulness and vivacity, would refresh his friend's heart; with attentive consideration, would enter into and settle all his concerns; so far as he was able, would do anything for him great or small; and by a habit of openness and freedom, leave no room for misunderstanding. 'The Wesleys were already talked of for some religious practices, which were first occasioned by Mr. Morgan, of Christ Church. From these combined friends began a little society; for several others, from time to time, fell in; most of them only to be improved by their serious and useful discourse; and some few espousing all their resolutions and their whole way of life.

'Mr. John Wesley was always the chief manager, for which he was very fit; for he not only had more learning and experience than the rest, but he was blest with such activity as to be always gaining ground, and such steadiness that he lost none. What proposals he made to any were sure to charm them, because he was so much in earnest; nor could they afterwards slight them, because they saw him always the same. What supported this uniform vigour was the care he took to consider well of every affair before he engaged in it, making all his decisions in the fear of God, without passion, humour, or self-confidence; for though he had naturally a very clear apprehension, yet his exact prudence depended more on humanity and singleness of heart. To this I may add, that he had, I think, something of authority in his countenance; though, as he did not want address, he could soften his manner, and point as occasion required. Yet he never assumed anything to himself above his companions. Any of them might speak their mind, and their words were as strictly regarded by him as his were by them.

'It was their custom to meet most evenings, either at his chamber or one of the others, where, after some prayers (the chief subject of which was charity), they ate their supper and he read some book. But the chief business was to review what each had done that day, in pursuance of their common design, and to consult what steps were to be taken the next.

'Their undertaking included these several particulars: To converse with young students; to visit the' prisons; to instruct some poor families; and to take care of a school and a parish workhouse.

'They took great pains with the younger members of the University, to rescue them from bad company, and encourage them in a sober, studious life. If they had some interest with any such, they would get them to breakfast, and, over a dish of tea, endeavour to fasten some good hint upon them. They would bring them acquainted with other well-disposed young men. They would help them in those parts of learning which they stuck at. They would close with their best sentiments, drive on their convictions, give them rules of piety, when they would receive them, and watch over them with great tenderness.

'Some or other of them went to the castle every day; and another most commonly to Bocardo. Whoever came to the castle was to read in the chapel to as many prisoners as would attend, and to talk to the man or men whom he had taken particularly in charge. Before reading, he asked, Whether they had prayers yesterday (For some serious men among the prisoners read family prayers with the rest.) Whether they had read over again what was read last, and what they remembered of it Then he went over the heads of it to them; and afterwards went on in the same book for a quarter of an hour. The books they used were the Christian Monitor, the Country Parson's Advice to his Parishion's, and such like. When he had done, he summed up the several particulars that had been insisted on, enforced the advice given, and reduced it at least to two or three sentences, which they might easily remember. Then he took his man aside, and asked him, Whether he was in the chapel yesterday and other questions concerning his care to serve God, and learn his duty.

'When a new prisoner came, their conversation with him, for four or five times was particularly close and searching. Whether he bore no malice towards those that did prosecute him, or any others The first time after professions of goodwill, they only inquired of his circumstances in the world. Such questions imported friendship, and engaged the man to open his heart. Afterwards they entered upon such inquiries as most concern a prisoner. Whether he submitted to the disposal of Providence Whether he repented his past life Last of all, they asked him, Whether he constantly used private prayer, and whether he had ever been communicated. Thus, most or all of the prisoners were spoken to in their turns, But, if any one was either under sentence of death, or appeared to have some intentions of a new life, they came every day to his assistance; and partook in the conflict and suspense of those who now should be found able, or not able, to lay hold on salvation. In order to release those who were confined for small debts, and were bettered by their affliction, and likewise to purchase books, physic, and other necessaries, they raised small fund, to which many of their acquaintance contributed quarterly. They had prayers at the castle most Wednesdays and Fridays, a sermon on Sundays, and the Sacrament once a month.

'When they undertook any poor family, they saw them, at least, once a week; sometimes gave them money; admonished them of their vices; read to them, and examined their children. The school was, I think, of Mr. Wesley's own setting up. At all events, he paid the mistress, clothed some, if not all of the children. When they went thither, they inquired how each child behaved; saw their work (for some could knit and spin); heard them read; heard them their prayers and Catechism, and explained part of it. In the same manner they taught the children in the workhouse; and read to the old people as they did to the prisoners.

'Though some practices of Mr. Wesley and his friends were much — their fasting on Wednesday and Friday — after the custom of the primitive Church; their coming on those Sundays, when there was no sacrament in their own colleges, to receive it at Christ Church — yet nothing was so much disliked as these charitable employments. They seldom took any notice of the accusations brought against them; but if they made any reply, it was commonly such a 'plain and simple one, as if there was nothing more in the case, but that they had heard such doctrines of their Saviour, and believed and done accordingly.' "Shall we be more happy in another life, the more virtuous we are in this Are we the more virtuous the more intensely we love God and man Is love, as all habits, the-more intent, the more we exercise it Is either helping, or trying to help, man, for God's sake, an exercise of love to God or man Particularly, is the feeding the hungry, the giving drink to the thirsty, the clothing the naked, the visiting sick persons or prisoners, an exercise of 'love to God or man Is the endeavouring to teach the ignorant, to admonish sinners, to encourage the good, to comfort the afflicted, to confirm the wavering, and to reconcile enemies, the exercise of love to God or man Shall we be the more happy in another life. If we do the former of these things, and try rode the latter Or if we do not the one, nor try to do the other.'" "

This is a minute delineation of the proceedings of the Holy Club, written in great simplicity by one of themselves. It will be seen how prominent a part Wesley took in all. It is indicative of his attention to minute details, and exhibits the influence of his orderly, logical, and earnest mind. In the remainder of Gambold's narrative, for such it is, Wesley is more directly spoken of, and we are better enabled to imagine him in the pursuit of his work. Gambold goes on to say:

'What I would chiefly remark upon is the manner in which Mr. Wesley directed his friends. Because he required such a regulation of our studies, as might devote them all to God, he has been cried out upon as one that discouraged learning. Far from that; the first thing he struck at in young men was that indolence which would not submit to close thinking. Nor was he against reading much, especially at first; because then the mind ought to fill itself with materials, and try everything that looks bright and perfect

'He earnestly recommended to them a method and order in all their actions. After their morning devotions (which were at a fixed and early hour, from five to six being the time, morning as well as evening), he advised them to determine with themselves what they were to do all the parts of the day. By such foresight, they would, at every hour's end, not be in doubt how to dispose of themselves; and by bringing themselves under the necessity of such a plan, they might correct the impotence of a mind that had been used to live by humour and chance, and prepare it by degrees to bear the other restraints of a holy life.

'The next thing was to put them upon keeping the fasts, visiting poor people, and coming to the weekly Sacrament; not only to subdue the body, increase charity, and obtain Divine grace, but (as he expressed it) to cut off their retreat to the world. He judged that, if they did these things, men would cast out their name as evil, and, by the impossibility of keeping fair any longer with the world, oblige them to take their whole refuge in Christianity. But those whose resolutions he thought would not bear this test, he left to gather strength by their secret exercises.

'It was his earnest care to introduce them to the treasures of wisdom and hope in the Holy Scriptures; to teach them not only to endure that book, but to form themselves by it, and to fly to it as the great antidote against the darkness of this world. For some years past, he and his friends read the New Testament together at evening. After every portion of it, having heard the conjectures the rest had to offer, he made his observations on the phrase, design, and difficult places. One or two wrote these down from his mouth. 'He hid much stress upon self-examination. He taught them (besides what occurs in his Collection of Prayers) to take account of their actions in a very exact manner, by writing a constant diary. In this, they noted down in cipher, once if not oftener in the day, what chiefly their employments had been in the several parts of it, and how they had performed each. Mr. Wesley had these records of his life by him for many years past. And some I have known, who, to seal their convictions and make their repentance more solemn, would write down such reflections upon themselves as the anguish of their soul at that time suggested, adding any spiritual maxim which some experience of their own had confirmed to them.

'Then, to keep in their minds an awful sense of God's presence, with a constant dependence on His help, he advised them to ejaculatory Prayers. They had a book of ejaculations relating to the chief virtues, and, lying by them as they stood at their studies, they at intervals snatched a short petition out of it. But at last, instead of that variety, they contented themselves with the following aspirations (containing acts of faith, hope, love, and self-resignation at the end of every hour)—"Consider and hear me," etc.'

Although the so-called 'Methodists' were by their practices distinguished from the rest of the University, it does not appear that they had formed themselves into a definite Religious Society! That Wesley contemplated their doing so seems probable from a letter addressed to him by his friend Clayton, who was now resident in Manchester. Clayton says, 'I was at Mr. Deacon's when your letter came to hand, and we had a deal of talk about your scheme of avowing yourselves as a society, and fixing upon a set of rules. The Doctor seemed to think you had better let it alone; for to what end would it serve It would be no additional tie upon yourselves; and perhaps would be a snare for the consciences of those weak brethren who might chance come among you. Observing the stations [the fast on Wednesdays and Fridays], and weekly communion, are duties which stand upon a much higher footing than a rule of a society; and they who can set aside the command of God and the authority of the Church will hardly, I doubt, be tied by the rules of a private society.'

On June 11, 1734, Wesley again preached before the University, and for his sermon—'his Jacobite sermon'—was 'much mauled and threatened more.' But he was wise enough to get the Vice-Chancellor to read and approve it before he preached it, and might therefore bid Wadham, Merton, Exeter, and Christ Church do their worst. This is all that is known of this sermon. But there is a sermon, preyed about this time by Wesley for the use of his pupils, and published by him fifty-five years after, the sentiments of which he says he had not in all that time had occasion to alter. The sermon is on the duty of constant communion. It illustrates alike his views on the subject, and the extreme carefulness with which he sought to guide his pupils.

Wesley's frequent journeys, often on foot as well as on horseback and the great and constant labour of preaching, reading, visiting, etc., wherever he was, with hard study and a very abstemious diet, had now greatly affected his health. His strength was much reduced, and he had frequent attacks of spitting of blood. In the night of July 16 he had a return of it in such quantity as to awake him out of sleep, The sudden and unexpected manner of its coming on, with the solemnity of the night season made eternity seem near. He cried to God, 'O, prepare me for Thy coming, and come when Thou wilt!' His friends began to be alarmed for his safety, and his mother wrote two or three letters, blaming him for the general neglect of his health. He sought and took the advice of a physician; and by proper care, and a prudent management of his daily exercise, gradually recovered his strength.

In the autumn of this year (September 21, Moore says) he began 'the practice of reading on horseback which he continued for nearly forty years. 'Near thirty years ago,' he wrote, in March, 1770, 'I was thinking, "How is it that no horse ever stumbles while I am reading" History, poetry, and philosophy I commonly read on horseback (having other employment at other times). No account Can possibly be given but this: Because then I throw the reins on his neck. I then set myself to observe; and I aver, that in riding above an hundred thousand miles, I scarce ever remember any horse (except two, that would fall head over heels any way) to fall, Or to make a considerable stumble, while I rode with a slack rein. To fancy therefore that a tight rein prevents stumbling is a capital blunder. I have

repeated the trial more frequently than most men in the kingdom can do. A slack rein will prevent stumbling if anything will. But in some horses nothing can.'

The health of the veteran Rector of Epworth was now rapidly failing. Apprehending the near approach of his end, and desiring that the living of Epworth should remain in the family, he wrote to his son, urging him to seek the next presentation, and thereby secure the old home for his mother and sisters. His brother Samuel urged the same upon him. Wesley wrote at considerable length to his father, giving his reasons, under twenty-six heads, in favour of his remaining in Oxford, and against his removing to Epworth. His brother Samuel continued to debate the point with him. John's main contention was, 'The question is not whether I could do more good to others there or here but whether I could do more to myself; seeing wherever I can be most holy myself, there I am assured I can most promote holiness in others; but I am equally assured there is no place under heaven so fit for my improvement as Oxford.' Samuel sought to fix him to his obligation. 'You are not at liberty to resolve against undertaking a cure of souls. You are solemnly engaged to do it before God and His high priest, and His Church. Are you not ordained Did you not deliberately and openly promise to instruct, to teach, to admonish, to exhort those committed to your charge Did you equivocate then with so vile a reservation, as to purpose in your heart that you would never have any so committed It is not a college; it is not a university; it is the order of the Church, according to which you were called.' John replied, 'I do not nor ever did resolve against taking a cure of souls. There are four cures belonging to our college, and consistent with a Fellowship: I do not know but I may take one of them at Michaelmas. Not that I am clearly assured that I should be false to my engagement, were I only to instruct and exhort the pupils committed to my charge' Samuel says, 'You can leave Oxford when you will. Not surely to such advantage. You have a probability of doing good there. Will that good be wholly undone if you leave it Why should you not leave another lump' And again he urges, 'the order of the Church stakes you down, and the more you struggle will hold the faster. If there be such a thing as truth, I insist upon it you must, when opportunity offers, either perform that promise, or repent of it.' To this John retorts, 'Another can supply my place at Epworth better than at Oxford, and the good done here is of a far more diffusive nature. It is a more extensive benefit to sweeten the fountain, than to do the same to particular streams. God may suffer Epworth to be worse than before. But I may not attempt to prevent it, with so great hazard to my own soul Your last argument is either ignoratio elenchi, or implies these two propositions. 1st, "You resolve against any parochial cure of souls." 2nd, "The priest who does not undertake the first parochial cure that offers, is perjured." Let us add a third, "The tutor, who being in Orders, never accepts of a parish, is perjured." And then I deny all three.'

John now desired to close the discussion, and being doubtful only on one point raised by his brother— whether at his ordination he had engaged to undertake the cure of souls—and recognize that 'the true sense of the words of an oath, and the mode and extent of its obligation, are not to be determined by him who takes it, but by him who requires it,' he referred the question to Dr. Potter, Bishop of Oxford, by whom he was ordained. The reply is, 'It doth not seem to me, that at your ordination you engaged yourself to undertake the cure of any parish, provided you can, as a clergyman, better serve God and His Church in your present or some other station.' Within two months of the date of this letter, Wesley by some means was led to set aside all his strong reasons for continuing in Oxford, and, yielding to the desire of the family, made application for the living at Epworth. But the effort proved unsuccessful; it was already promised to another.

On April 25, 1735, the aged Rector passed peacefully to his rest in the presence of his loving wife his two sons, John and Charles, and other members of the family. Charles, writing to his brother says, 'You have reason to envy us, who could attend him in the last stage of his illness. The few words he could utter I saved, and hope never to forget. Some of them were, "Nothing too much to suffer for heaven, The weaker I am in the body, the stronger and more sensible support I feel from God. Tomorrow I will see you all with me around this table, that we may once more drink of the cup of blessing before we drink it new in the kingdom of God."... He often laid his hand upon my head and said, "Be steady. The Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom; you shall 'see it, though I shall not." To my sister Emily he said, "Do not be concerned at my death; God Will then begin to manifest himself to my family..... Oh, Charles, I feel a great deal, God chastens' me with strong pain, but I praise Him for it, I thank Him for it I love Him for it."...On my brother's asking him, "Whether he was not near heaven" he answered distinctly, and with the most of hope and triumph that could be expressed in words, "Yes, I am" He spoke once more, just after my brother had used the commendatory prayer; his last words. were, "Now, you have done all,". From this time till about sunset he made sighs of offering up himself, till my brother having again used the prayer, the very moment, it was finished, he expired.' So closed the, chequered life of one of the most noble-minded, active, cultured, faithful sons of the English church.

The living was given away in May, resulting in the speedy dispersal of the family, Mrs. Wesley finding a temporary home with her eldest daughter, Emilia, at her school in Gainsborough, and thus closed also the history of that distinguished, that unique home at Epworth Parsonage.

Wesley returned to Oxford to pursue his favourite work there. Many years afterwards, he wrote of this time, 'Having now obtained what I long desired, a company of friends that were as my own soul, I set up my rest, being fully determined to live and die in this sweet retirement.' But Wesley was not his own master, He was in higher hands. He must now prove that 'the way of man is not in himself,' that 'it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' A little while before his death, Samuel Wesley had requested his son John to present a copy of his work on Job to Queen Caroline, to whom it was dedicated; and during the preceding year Wesley had already spent some time in London on business relating to the publishing of this book. Almost as soon as he had returned to Oxford from his father's

funeral he had occasion again to go to London on this accounts. Here he met with his friend Dr. Burton, of Corpus Christi College, and was by him introduced to General Oglethorpe, who had been a friend and correspondent of his father's. General Oglethorpe had just returned from Georgia, whither he had gone to aid in establishing the colony newly founded there. The trustees of the colony, of whom Dr. Burton was one, were desirous of securing the services of John and Charles Wesley, and some of their companions, to minister to the colonists, and to act as missionaries to the Indians. The subject was now named to Wesley, and he was strongly urged to comply with the request. At first, he says, he peremptorily refused; but many providential incidents followed, which at length constrained him to alter his resolution. After taking counsel with his brother Samuel and with Mr. Law, and visiting Manchester to consult his friends Clayton and Byrom, he went to Gainsborough, where he spent three days with his widowed mother, and laid the whole matter before her and his eldest sister, Emily; having secretly determined that he would accept his mother's decision as indicating to him the will of God. The noble and heroic woman, dependent as she was upon her sons, her chief support and comfort in her declining years, and clinging to them with a fervent devotion, boldly declared, 'Had I twenty sons I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more.'

That this world have had his father's approbation cannot be doubted, when it is known that, six months before his death, he had written thus to General Oglethorpe: 'I am at length, I thank God, slowly recovering from a long illness, during which were have been few days or nights but my heart has been working hard for Georgia. I had always so dear a love for your colony, that if it had been ten years ago, I would gladly have devoted the remainder of my life and labours to, that place, and think I might, before his time, have conquered the language—without which little can be done among the natives—if the Bishop of London would have done me the honour to have sent me thither, as perhaps he then might. But that is now over. However, I can still reach them with my prayers, which I am sure will never be wanting.' This is most interesting in the light of subsequent events. Little thought he at that time that in less than twelve months two of his sons would have embarked on this enterprise.

Samuel Wesley and Emilia both approved of his accepting the proposal, but Wesley himself still hesitated. Dr. Burton wrote a pressing letter to him on September 8, the persuasions of which he finally yielded. When his brother Charles heard of this, he declared his willingness to accompany him. This was vehemently opposed by Samuel, but in vain. Charles engaged himself as secretary to General Oglethorpe, and also as Secretary for Indian Affairs. At this time Charles was not ordained, and was not forward to be; but his brother overruled his disinclination, and he was ordained deacon by Dr. Potter, Bishop of Oxford, and on the Sunday following priest by Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London.

It does not appear that Wesley's consent to go to Georgia arose out of any change in his views as to the attractiveness of Oxford life and the value of his work there, for he evidently underwent a very severe struggle before he yielded. And it is equally evident that his compliance was against his own strong preferences and inclinations. It is reasonable, however, to suppose that the partial dissolution of his purpose to remain, which was brought about by the pressure that induced him to apply for the cure at Epworth, had in some measure prepared him to receive the forcible considerations that were brought before him by Oglethorpe and Burton; and it is not unfair to conclude that the conviction was wrought in his mind by them, that the work in Georgia offered to him more favourable conditions for his own Progress in holiness (his supreme desire); a wider field for usefulness; and, assuredly, a more powerful appeal to his Charity.

Writing many years after of this juncture in his history, in reply to a public assertion that early had a very strong impression of his designation to some extraordinary work, he says: 'Indeed not I; I never said so; I never thought so; I am guiltless in this matter. The strongest impression I had till I was three or four and twenty was—

Inter sylvas Academi quarete verum;

and afterwards (while I was my father's curate), to save my own soul and those that heard me. When I returned to Oxford it was my full resolve to live and die there; the reasons for which I gave in a long letter to my father, since printed in one of my Journals. In this purpose I continued, till Dr. Burton, one of the trustees for Georgia, pressed me to go over with General Oglethorpe (who is still alive, and well knows the whole transaction), in order to preach to the Indians. With great difficulty I was prevailed upon to go, and spend upwards of two years abroad.'

In a letter to 'A Friend,' from which the following extracts are taken, Wesley gives his reasons for going forth on this mission.

'October 10 1735

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'DEAR SIR,

'I have been hitherto unwilling to mention the grounds of my design of embarking for Georgia, for two reasons—-one, because they were such as I know few men would judge to be of any weight; the other, because I was afraid of making favourable judges think of me above what they ought to think: and what a snare this must be to my own soul, I know by dear-bought experience

'My chief motive, to which all the rest are subordinate, is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the Gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen. They have no comments to construe away the text; no vain philosophy to corrupt it; no luxurious,

sensual, covetous, ambitious expounders to soften its displeasing truths, to reconcile earthly mindedness and faith, the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world

'A right faith will, I trust, by the mercy of God, open the way for a right practice; especially when most of those temptations are removed which here so easily beset me. Toward mortifying "the desire of the flesh," the desire of sensual pleasures, it will be no small thing to be able, without fear of giving offence, to live on water and the fruits of the earth. This simplicity of food will, I trust, be a blessed means, both of preventing my seeking that happiness in meats and drinks, which God designed should be found only in faith, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and will assist me to attain such purity of thought, as suits a candidate for the state wherein they are as the angels of God in heaven.

'Neither is it a small thing to be delivered from so many occasions, as now surround me, of indulging "the desire of the eye." They here compass me in on every side; but an Indian hut affords no food for curiosity, no gratification of the desire of grand, or new, or pretty things—though, indeed, the cedars which God has planted round it may so gratify the eye as to better the heart, by lifting it to Him whose name alone is excellent, and his praise above heaven and earth.

'If by "the pride of life" we understand the pomp and show of the world, that has no place in the wilds of America. If it mean pride in general, this, alas! has a place everywhere: yet there are very uncommon helps against it, not only by the deep humility of the poor heathens, fully sensible of their want of an instructor; but by that happy contempt which cannot fail to attend all who sincerely endeavour to instruct them

'Further: a sin which easily besets me is, unfaithfulness to God in the use of speech. I know that this is a talent instructed to me by my Lord, to be used, as all others only for His glory But, I hope, from the moment I leave the English shore, under the acknowledged character of a teacher sent from God, there shall be no word heard from my lips but what properly flows from that character: as my tongue is a devoted thing, I hope from the first hour of this new era to use it only as such, that all who hear me may know of a truth, the words I speak are not mine, but His that sent me.

'The same faithfulness I hope to show, through His grace, in dispensing the rest of my Master's goods, if it please Him to send me to those who, like His first followers, have all things common. What a guard is here against that root of evil, the love of money, and all the vile attractions that spring from it!...

'I then hope to know what it is to love my neighbour as myself, and to feel the powers of that second motive to visit the heathens, even the desire to impart to them what I have received—a saving knowledge of, the Gospel of Christ; but this I dare not think on yet. It is not for me, who have been a grievous sinner from my youth up, and am yet laden with foolish and hurtful desires, to expect God should work so great things by my hands; but I am assured, if I be once converted myself, He will then employ me both to strengthen my brethren, and to preach His name, to the Gentiles, that the very ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God.

'But you will perhaps ask, "Cannot you save your own soul in England, as well as in Georgia ~" I answer, No; neither can I hope to attain the same degree of holiness here, which I may there

'To the other motive—the hope of doing more good in America, it is commonly objected, that "there are Heathens enough in practice, if not theory, at home: why, then, should you go to those in America " Why, for a very plain reason: because these heathens have Moses and the Prophets, and those have not....

'If you object, further, the losses I must sustain in leaving my native country, I ask, Loss of what of anything I desire to keep No; I still have food to eat, and raiment to put on—enough of such food as I choose to eat, and such raiment as I desire to put on—and if any man have a desire of other things, or of more food than he can eat, or more raiment than he can put on, let him know that the greatest biasing that can possibly befall him, is, to be cut off from all occasions of gratifying those desires

But what shall we say to the loss of parents, brethren sisters, nay, of the friends which are as my own soul. "What shall we say" Why, that if you add the loss of life to the rest, so much the greater is the gain. For though "the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, the Word of our God shall stand for ever;" saying, that when human instruments are removed, He, the Lord, will answer us by His own self. And the general answer which He hath already given us to all questions of this nature is', "Verily, I say unto you, There is no man that hath left father, or mother, or lands, for my sake, but shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, with persecutions, and in the world; to come eternal life,"

In summarizing the period just reviewed, Isaac Taylor makes the following observations: 'Wesley's state of mind, and his habits at Oxford, included much intensity of feeling, brought to a focus-spot upon his individual welfare. It would be harsh and inaccurate to designate this introverted feeling as selfishness; or if we were to do so, an appeal might fairly be made to the self-denying labours and charities of Wesley, and of others who may come under the same description. But there may be much egotism where there is also much self-denial for the good of others. That which disperses this species of concentration, and which gives full play to a genuine

benevolence, is a better understanding of the Gospel than Wesley had at this time, or until long afterwards, attained. And yet we might say that Wesley's ascetic notions and practices, and the dangerous extent to which he went in fasting, were less indicative of his imperfect apprehension of Christianity, than was the pertinacious opposition he made to his father's proposal that he should take steps for being appointed as his successor at Epworth. In fact, his earnest piety had brought out, and given force to, that self-determining energy which was to qualify him for his function as founder and ruler of a society; but at this time it showed itself in an immovable resolution to think only of his own (supposed) spiritual welfare; and in defending himself in this position he stretched sophistry to the utmost, evading, by shallow pleas, at once the import of his ordination vow a clear call to extensive usefulness, and (if such considerations might be listened to) the duty of a son toward his parents. While we mark the overruling hand which had otherwise disposed Wesley's lot, his own part on this occasion—that is to say, in clinging to his college life when a populous parish was before him—shows clearly enough that a wilfulness still held its mastery in his mind, which years of severe discipline were needed to dispel. Yet this state of his mind was nothing more than a stage in his progress; it was not a mood in which a nature so noble (Christian principles apart) could have remained stationary. Christian principles, with a discipline efficient for its purpose, did at length thoroughly set him free from the bondage of every restrictive or self-regarding motive, and thenceforward as large and warm a philanthropy as a human bosom has ever admitted ruled him supremely.'

The name of George Whitefield must be mentioned here, as it must be again and again, and always with the respect due to one of the mightiest heralds of the Gospel known in all modern times. Born in the 'Bell Inn,' Gloucester, December 16 (O.S.), 1714, he was committed, from the second year of his age, to the sole care of a tender, faithful, loving, widowed mother, whom he ever held in reverent affection. At four years of age he had the measles, which, through the negligence of his nurse, left one of his dark-blue eyes with a squint. His surroundings were not favourable to the growth of goodness, and he became habituated to lying, evil-speaking and petty thefts, card-playing and Sabbath-breaking; overflowing with animal energy, full of wild, roguish tricks, with an impetuous, fiery spirit, and quick temper. But some seeds of goodness were sown in his young heart; and, though their growth was hindered by other influences, it was not wholly prevented. He was fascinated with stage-plays, spending whole days in studying and preparing to act them. Having a good memory, and a fine natural elocution, he was commonly selected to deliver the annual oration at the Grammar School of St. Mary de Crypt. It is related that with part of the money he received for his good acting and reciting, he purchased Ken's Manual for Winchester Scholars, a book which had affected him much when his brother used to read it in his mother's troubles, and which, for some time after he bought it, 'was of great use to his soul.' At fifteen he took to the dress and work of a common drawer in his mother's inn. His religious tendencies—for he was not without them—led him to frequent reading of the Bible, even to sitting up late for the purpose. Visiting for a time a brother in Bristol, he became the subject of many religious emotions, He had 'much sensible devotion,' and was filled with 'unspeakable raptures,' Sometimes' carried out beyond himself; he longed after the Sacrament, pondered the Imitation of Christ, and delighted in it; he was impatient to hear the church-bell calling him to worship; while his former employment became distasteful to him, and he resolved not to return to it. But when, leaving Bristol, he returned to his old companions, this was followed by a relapse, and church-going and prayer ceased. His old love for play-reading returned. One morning, whilst reading a play to his sister, he said, 'Sister, God intends something for me that we know not of. As I have been diligent in business, I believe many would gladly have me for an apprentice; but every way seems to be barred up, so that I think God will provide for me some way or other that we cannot apprehend.' A visit from a former schoolfellow, now a servitor at Pembroke College, Oxford, led to his seeking a similar position. Passing through a period alternating between efforts after a better life and relapses into sinful indulgence, he at length, when nearly eighteen years of age, entered Pembroke College, Oxford, as a servitor. He now toiled at his classics, and adhered to his earlier religious practices. His excitable mind was stirred by Law's Serious Call to a Devout Life, and his Christian Perfection.'

In the spring of this year Whitefield had undergone a great spiritual change. Extremely pathetic is the story given by him in his Journals of his passage through a deep sea of anguish to a condition of holy joyfulness.

My inward sufferings were of a more exercising nature. . . All power of meditating or even thinking was taken from me God only knows how many nights I have lain upon my bed groaning under what I have felt. Whole days and weeks have I spent in lying prostrate on the ground in silent or vocal prayer; and, having nobody to show me a better way, I thought to get peace and purity by outward austerities. Accordingly, by degrees I began to leave off eating fruits and such like, and gave the money I usually spent in that way to the poor. Afterward I always chose the worst sort of food, though my place furnished me With variety. I fasted twice a week.... For many months I went on in this legal state Near five or six weeks I had now spent in my study, except when college business obliged me to go down. During this time I was fighting with my corruptions, and did little else besides kneeling down by my bedside, feeling a heavy pressure upon my body, as well as an unspeakable oppression of mind, yet offering up my soul to God, to do with me as it pleased Him. . . . I Went into Christ Church walk; near our college, and continued in silent prayer under one of the trees kneeling on my knees till the great bell rung for retirement to the college. . . By this time I had left off keeping my diary using my forms, or scarce my voice in prayer, visiting the prisoners, etc. Nothing remained for me to leave, unless I forsook public worship, but my religious friends. Now it was suggested that I must leave them all for Christ's sake. This was a sore trial, but rather than not be, as I fancied Christ's disciple, I resolved to renounce them, though as dear to me as my own soul.

Accordingly, the next day, being Wednesday, whereon we kept one of our weekly fasts, instead of meeting with my brethren as usual, I went out into the fields, and prayed silently by myself Our evening meeting I neglected also, and went not to breakfast, according to appointment, with Mr. Charles Wesley the day following. This, with many other concurring circumstances, made him suspect something

more than ordinary was the matter. He came to my room, apprised me of my danger if I would not take his advice; recommended me to his brother John, Fellow of Lincoln College, as more experienced than himself. God gave me a teachable temper; I waited upon his brother, who advised me to resume all my externals, though not to depend on them in the least, and from time to time he gave me directions as my pitiable state required.

'Soon after this Lent came on, which our friends [the little band of Methodists] kept very strictly, eating no flesh during the six weeks, except on Saturdays and Sundays. I abstained frequently on Saturdays also, and ate nothing on the other days (except on Sunday) but sage tea without sugar, and coarse bread. I likewise constantly walked out in the cold mornings, till part of one of my hands was quite black. This, with my continued abstinence and inward conflicts, at length so emaciated my body, that at Passion week, finding I could scarcely creep up stairs, I was obliged to inform my kind tutor of my condition, who immediately sent for a physician to me.

'This caused no small triumph amongst the gownsmen, who began to cry out, "What is his fasting come to now!" But, however, notwithstanding my fit of sickness continued six or seven weeks, I trust I shall have reason to bless God for it, through the endless ages of eternity. For, about the end of the seventh week, after having undergone innumerable buffetings of Satan, and many months inexpressible trials by night and day under the Spirit of Bondage, God was pleased at length to remove the heavy load, to enable me to lay hold on his dear Son by a living faith, and by giving me the Spirit of Adoption, to seal me as I humbly hope, even to the day of everlasting redemption.

'But oh, with what joy, joy unspeakable, even joy that was full of and big with glory, was my soul filled, when the weight of sin went off; and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full Assurance of Faith, broke in upon my disconsolate soul! Surely it was the Day of my Espousals, a day to be had in everlasting remembrance. At first my joys were like a spring tide, and as it were over, owed the banks. Go where I would, I could not avoid singing of Psalms almost aloud; afterwards it became more settled, and, blessed be God, saving a few casual intervals, abode and increased in my soul ever since.... My mind being now more open and enlarged, I began to read the Holy Scriptures (upon my knees), laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. This proved meat indeed and drink indeed to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light and power from above; and found it profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, -every way sufficient to make the man of God perfect, throughly furnished unto every good word or work.'

Whitefield was behind Wesley in years and attainments, but he was before him, in point of time, in securing the joyous blessedness of the gospel faith. Whitefield was ordained by Dr. Benson, Bishop of Gloucester, who, having previously inquired his age (he was in his twenty-second year), said, 'Notwithstanding I have declared I would not ordain any one under three and twenty, yet I shall think it my duty to ordain you whenever you come; for Holy Orders.' He tells us that he spent the day before his ordination in abstinence and prayer. In the evening he retired to a hill near the town, and prayed fervently for about two hours, in behalf of himself and those that were to be ordained with him. On Sunday morning he rose early, and prayed over St. Paul's Epistle to Timothy, and more particularly over that precept, Let no one despise thy youth. And he says, 'When the Bishop laid his hands upon my head, if my vile heart doth not deceive me, I offered up my whole spirit, soul, and body to the service of God's Sanctuary, and afterwards sealed the good confession I had made before many witnesses; by partaking of the Holy Sacrament of our Lord's most blessed body and blood.'

Whitefield's ordination took place at Gloucester on Trinity Sunday, 1736, and he preached his sermon on The Necessity and Benefit of Religious Society to a very crowded audience the following Lord's day, in the Church in which he was baptized. He then set out to Oxford, where he was received by his friends with great joy. A week later he took his degree of Bachelor of Arts, after having been at the University three years and three quarters.

It has seemed right to give this account of one of the Oxford band of Methodists, inasmuch as he stands distinguished from the others by his identification with the subsequent great Methodist movement, and by his intimate association with Wesley.

The little band of Oxford Methodists now passes from our view. It was not only deprived of the Wesleys and Ingham, but other members of it removed from Oxford about the same time. Mr. Kinchin, however, was elected Dean of Corpus Christi College, which compelled his frequent residence there; he remained faithful to the principles of the Methodists; and Dr. Hutchins, Hervey's tutor, continued to be an Oxford Methodist long after all his old friends had gone. It has been suggested that, on the removal of the Wesleys, the few remaining Methodists came under Whitefield's care. Not precisely so; for though he exerted a powerful influence upon them when he was present, yet he was much away from Oxford during the time that elapsed between Wesley's departure for Georgia and his own. We find him at Oxford about the end of June, 1737, 'where,' he says, 'we had, as it were, a rendezvous of the Methodists, and finding their interests flourishing, I hastened away and came to London about the end of August.'

He embarked for Georgia on December 28, 1737.