

The Foundations of Methodism (1739-1740)

THE new year was ushered in by a very extraordinary service held in the evening of New Year's Day, 1739. Messrs. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hutchins, and the two brothers Wesley were present at a love-feast at Fetter Lane, with about sixty others, the number of the Fetter Lane Society at that time. 'About three o'clock in the morning,' Wesley says, 'as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty, we broke out with one voice, We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.' Whitefield, writing of this day, says that he received the Holy Sacrament, preached twice and expounded twice, and found this to be the happiest New Year's Day that he ever saw; and afterwards adds that he spent the whole night in close prayer, psalms, and thanksgivings with the Fetter Lane Society. Nor was this the only all-night service they held, for on January 5, he writes again, 'Held a Conference at Islington 'concerning many things, of importance, with seven ministers of Jesus Christ, despised Methodists, whom God in his providence brought together. We continued in fasting and prayer till three o'clock, and then parted with a full conviction that God was about to do great things among us; and again, on Sunday 7, preached twice, expounded to three Societies, and afterwards spent the whole night in prayer and thanksgiving at Fetter Lane.'

Thus began a year of supreme importance in the history of the great spiritual revival in these islands, as the incidents to be recorded will show. Wesley continued the same round of earnest labour that he had pursued since his return to England. He visited Oxford, Dummer, and Reading; and in London found full employment amongst the many societies, where he was continually urged to expound. From all the churches, however, he was excluded, except Basingshaw, Islington, St. Giles's, and St. Katherine's; so that in the earlier part of the year, previous to his going to Bristol, he did not preach more than half a dozen sermons in the churches.

The character of Wesley's work at this time may be gathered from the following extract from a letter written by him to Whitefield :—

' February 26, 1739.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

'Our Lord's hand is not shortened amongst us. Yesterday I preached at St. Katherine's, and at Islington, where the church was almost as hot as some of the society rooms used to be. I think I never was so much strengthened before. The Fields, after service, were white with people praising God. About three hundred were present at Mr. S—'s; thence I went to Mr. Bray's, then to Fetter Lane, and at nine to Mr. B—'s; where also we only wanted room. To-day I expound in the Minorities at four, at Mrs. W—'s at six, and to a large company of Poor sinners in Gravel Lane (Bishopsgate) at eight. The society at Mr. Cronch's does not meet till eight, so that I expound before I go to him near St. James's Square; where one young woman has been lately filled with the Holy Ghost, and overflows with joy and love. On Wednesday at six, we have a noble company of women, not adorned with gold or costly apparel, but with a meek and quiet spirit, and good works. At the Savoy on Thursday evening we have usually two or three hundred, most of them, at least, thoroughly awakened. Mr. A—'s padour is more than filled on Friday, as is Mr. P—'s room twice over; where, I think, I have commonly had more power given me than at any other place. A week or two ago, a note was given me there, as near as I can remember, in these words: "Your prayers are desired for a sick child that is lunatick, and sore vexed day and night, that our Lord would heal him, as He did those in the days of His flesh; and that he would give his parents faith and patience till his time is come."

'On Saturday se'n night a middle aged, well-dressed woman at Beech-Lane (where I expound usually to five or six hundred before I go to Mr. E—'s society) was seized, as it appeared to several about her, with little less than the agonies of death. Prayer was made for her, and after five days of diligent seeking she was filled with love and joy, which she openly declared at the next meeting; so that thanksgivings also were given to God by many on her account. It is to be observed, her friends have accounted her mad for these three years; and accordingly bled, blistered her, and what not. Come and let us praise the Lord, and magnify His name together.'

During the first few weeks of the year Whitefield had preached about thirty sermons in different churches in and around London. Early in February he went to Bath and Bristol; but on his arrival found all the churches closed against him. In a few days, however, he was granted the use of St. Werburgh's and of St. Mary Redcliff. But the Chancellor of Bristol interfered, and threatened that if he continued to preach or expound in the diocese without licence he should first be suspended and then expelled. This was the turning-point. Whitefield was not submissive to Church order as his companion Wesley, who in such circumstances might have hesitated to disobey so direct a prohibition. Wholly to suppress Whitefield by such measures was impossible; and hence, being shut out of the Bristol churches, away he went and preached in the open-air to two hundred colliers in Kingswood. This was the boldest step yet taken by any of the Methodists; and perhaps none but the impulsive, large, hearted Whitefield would have dreamed of so shocking a departure from Church rule and usage. The Rubicon was passed. A clergyman had dared to be so irregular as to preach in the fields, and God had sanctioned the irregularity by making it the occasion of much blessing. This is so interesting an incident, leading to so great consequences in the mission of the heroic little band of Christian evangelists, that the following minute accounts from Whitefield's Journal may not

inappropriately be inserted. He says:

'Sunday, January 21.—Preached twice, with great freedom in my heart and clearness in my voice, to two thronged congregations, especially in the afternoon, when as I was informed, near a thousand people stood out in the churchyard, and hundreds more returned home that could not come in. This put me first upon thinking of preaching without doors. I mentioned it to some friends, who looked upon it as a mad notion. However, we kneeled down and prayed that nothing may be done rashly.

'Friday, February 16,—Having long felt an earnest yearning toward the poor colliers, who were very numerous, and yet were as sheep having no shepherd, I went upon a mount and spake to as many as came to hear; upwards of two hundred. [Here he bursts into a holy jubilation], "Blessed be God that the ice is now broke, and I have now taken the field. Some may censure me. But is flute not a cause t Pulpits are denied, and the poor colliers are ready to perish far lack 'of knowledge."

'Wednesday, February 21.—[All the church doors being now shut against him, and if open not able to contain half that came to hear, at three in the afternoon, he went to Kings- wood amongst the colliers. It was a fine day, and near two thousand people were assembled. He says], "I preached and enlarged on John iii. 3, for near an hour, and I hope to the comfort and edification of those that heard me." [He goes on to say]:

'Friday, February 23.—After dinner, I was taken very ill, so that I was obliged to lie upon the bed; but at three I went according to appointment, and preached to near four or five thousand people, from a mount in Kingswood, with great freedom. The sun shone very bright, and the people standing in such an awful manner round the mount, in the profoundest silence, filled me with an holy admiration.

'Sunday, February 25,—When I arose in the morning, I thought I should be able to 'do nothing; but the divine strength was greatly magnified in my Weakness. About six in the morning I prayed, sung with, and exhorted my morning visitors, as I did last Lord's day. At eight I read prayers and preached to a very thronged congregation at Newgate; from thence I rode to Bustleton Brislington] a village about two miles from Bristol, where was such a numerous congregation, that, after I had read prayers in the church, I thought it best to go and preach in the churchyard. The people were exceedingly attentive, and afterwards, by the leave of the minister, who invited me thither, we had a Sacrament; and I hope it was a communion of saints indeed. At four I hasted to Kingswood. At a moderate computation, there were above ten thousand people. The trees and hedges were full; all was hushed when I began; the sun shone bright, and God enabled me to preach for an hour with great power, and so loud that all (I was told) could hear me. Blessed be God, Mr. B[rai]n spoke right. The fire is kindled in the country. May the gates of hell never be able to prevail against it!'

At a later date he calculated his congregation at not fewer than twenty thousand, and remarks, 'To behold such crowds stand about us in such awful silence, and to hear the echo of their singing, is very solemn and surprising. My discourse continued for near an hour and a half.'

In the Gentleman's Magazine, for 1739, P. 162, it is stated, 'Mr. Whitefield has been wonderfully laborious and successful, especially among the poor prisoners at Newgate, Bristol, and among the rude colliers of Kingswood. On Saturday, the 18th instant, he preached at Hannam [Hanham] Mount to five or six thousand persons, and in the evening removed to the Common, about half a mile farther, where three mounts and the plains around were crowded with so great a multitude of coaches, foot and horsemen, that they covered three acres, and were computed at 20,000 people.'

During the month of February, Wesley had three separate interviews with bishops of the Established Church. On the 6th, he went with Whitefield to the Bishop of Gloucester, to solicit a subscription for Georgia. On the 21st, he and his brother Charles waited on Potter, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who showed them great affection; spoke mildly of Whitefield; cautioned them to give no more umbrage than necessary; to forbear exceptionable phrases; and to keep to the doctrines of the Church. They told him they expected persecution; but would abide by the Church till her articles and homilies were repealed. From Potter, they proceeded direct to Gibson, Bishop of London, who denied that he had condemned them, or even heard much about them. Whitefield's Journal, he said, was tainted with enthusiasm, though Whitefield himself was a pious, well-meaning youth. He warned them against Antinomianism, and dismissed them kindly.

About this time (March, 1739) a certain Captain Williams made an affidavit before the Mayor of Bristol, scandalously affecting the conduct of Wesley when in Georgia, especially in reference to his treatment of Mrs. Williamson (Miss Hopkey), and the circumstances connected with his leaving the colony. This was published, to the subsequent great detriment of the newly formed society.

This scurrilous pamphlet would not deserve notice were it not for the fact that it was the occasion of Wesley giving to the world one of the most interesting and instructive autobiographies ever published. In the preface to his Journal he says: 'I had no design or desire to trouble the world with any of my little affairs; as cannot but appear to every impartial mind, from my having been so long "as one that heareth not;" notwithstanding the loud and frequent calls I have had to answer for myself. Neither should I have done it now, had not Captain Williams's affidavit, published as soon as he had left England, laid an obligation upon me, to do what in me lies, in obedience to that command of God, "Let not the good which is in you be evil spoken of." With this view I do at length "give an answer to every man that asketh me a reason of the hope which is in me," that in all things "I have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men,!'

This first "extract" from his private Journal comprises the period from his embarking for Georgia to his return to London, and was published in 1739.

'The real character of the men who had begun this suit soon after appeared. Causton was prosecuted for an embezzlement of public money; and Williamson fled clandestinely from the colony, to avoid the consequences of more grave offences.'

Two years afterwards, to check the ill effects of the affidavit, Wesley reissued so much of his Journal as related to this affair. Happily Wesley was led to continue the publication of extracts from his Journal to the end of his life.

As bearing upon the publication of this Journal, the following extract from a later part of it may appropriately find place here. It is dated December 3, 1738. The Journal was, published either at the Close of this, or (probably) at the early part of the following year. Wesley says, 'I received a letter, earnestly desiring me to publish my account of Georgia; and another as earnestly dissuading me from it, "because it would bring much trouble upon me." I consulted God in His Word, and received two answers; the first, Ezek. xxxiii. 26 [According to the duty of a watchman to do his duty in warning the people, the prophet is warned of his duty]. The other, "Thou therefore endure hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."'

Tyerman gives the following interesting letter from Wesley to his friend Whitefield; it is dated March 16, 1739, and affords an insight into Wesley's occupation at the time:

March 16, 1739.

' MY DEAR BROTHER,

'On Thursday, the 8th instant we breakfasted at Mr. ScOre's, Oxford, who is patiently waiting for the salvation of God. Thence we went to Mrs. Campton's, who has set her face as a flint. After we had spent some time in prayer, Mr; Washington came with Mr. Gibbs, and read that he knew nothing of the reprinting of that affidavit, but that he has made diligent inquiry into that affair when abroad, and has found that the Rev. Mr'. Wesley has been much injured, both in respect' to anything criminal 'in his character; and is to his going from his Ball, there being no Bail given. The whole prosecution I verily believe was groundless; Such as require further particulars, I refer them to Mr. Wesley's first Journal, page 46, which. I believe to be a true account.

'George Whitefield'

Several passages out of Bishop Patrick's Parable of the Pilgrim, to prove that we were all under a delusion, and that we were to be justified by faith and works. Charles Metcalfe withstood him to the face. After they were gone, we again besought our Lord that He would maintain His own cause. Meanwhile, Mr. Washington and Mr. Watson were going about to all parts, and confirming the unfaithful; and at seven, when I designed to expound at Mrs. Campton's, Mr. Washington was got there before me, and was beginning to read Bishop Bull against the witness of the Spirit. He told me he was authorized by the minister of the parish to do this. I advised all who valued their souls to depart; and, perceiving it to be the less evil of the two, that they who remained might not be perverted, I entered directly into the controversy, touching both the cause and fruits of justification

'At my return to Mrs. Fox's, I found our dear brother Kinchin just come from Bummer. We rejoiced, and gave thanks, and prayed, and took sweet counsel together; the result of which was, that instead of setting out for London, as I designed, on Friday morning, I set out for Dummer, there being no person to supply the church on Sunday. At Reading I found a young man, Cennick by name, strong in the faith of our Lord Jesus. He had begun a society there the week before; but the minister of the parish had now well-nigh overturned it. Several of the members of it spent the evening with us, and it pleased God to strengthen and comfort them.

'On Saturday morning, our brother Cennick rode with me, whom I found willing to suffer, yea, to die for his Lord. We came to Bummer in the afternoon: Miss Molly was weak in body, but strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Surely her light ought not thus to be hid under a bushel. She has forgiveness, but not the witness of the Spirit; perhaps because our dear brother Kinchin seems to think them inseparable.

'On Sunday morning we had a large and attentive congregation. In the evening, the room at Basingstoke was full, and my mouth was opened. We expected much opposition, but had none at all.

'On Monday, Mrs. Cleminger being in pain and fear, we prayed, and her Lord gave her peace. About noon we spent an hour or two in conference and prayer with Miss Molly; and then set out in a glorious storm; but I had a calm within. We had appointed the little society at Reading to meet us in the evening; but the enemy was too vigilant. Almost as soon as we were out of the town, the minister sent, or went, to each of the members, and began arguing and threatening, and utterly confounded them, so that they were all scattered abroad. Mr. Cennick's own sister did not dare to see us, but was gone out on purpose to avoid it.

"On Tuesday I came to Oxford again, and from Mrs. Fox's went to Mrs. Campton's. I found the minister of the parish had been there before me, to whom she had plainly declared that she had never had a true faith in Christ till a week ago. After some warm and sharp expressions, he told her he must repel her from the holy communion. Finding she was not convinced, even by that argument, he left her calmly rejoicing in God her Saviour.

'At six in the evening we were at Mrs. Fox's society about seven at Mrs. Campton's: the power of the Lord was present at both, and all our hearts were knit together in love.

'The next day we had an opportunity to confirm most, if not all the souls which had been shaken. In the afternoon I preached at the Castle. We afterwards joined together in prayer, having now Charles Graves added to us, who is rooted and grounded in the faith. We then went to Mr. Gibbs's room, where were Mr. Washington and Mr. Watson. Here an hour was spent in conference and prayer, but without any disputing. At four in the morning I left Oxford. God hath indeed planted and watered: O may He give the increase.

'I am, etc.,

'John Wesley.'

On March 22, Whitefield wrote to Wesley entreating him in the most pressing manner to come to Bristol without delay. From this 'Wesley' shrank, chiefly under the influence of the Scriptures, which, according to his method of consulting them in emergencies, presented themselves to him. The journey was proposed to the Society at Fetter Lane. Charles opposed, till, appealing similarly to the Word, he received the message, 'as spoken to himself,' 'Son of man, behold, I take from thee the desire of thine eyes at a stroke; yet shalt thou not mourn or weep, neither shall thy tears run down.' The question was referred to the Society, but they being unable to come to one mind, it was agreed to decide it by lot; by which' it was determined he should go. Several afterwards desiring they might 'open the Bible' concerning the issue of this, they did so on the following passages, 'which,' says Wesley, 'I shall set down without any reflection upon them. 2 Sam. iii. 1: "Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker." 2 Sam. iv. 11.: "How much more When wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed Shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth" 2 Chron. xxviii. 27: "And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem."'

It is not easy to see what instruction could be gained 'from this haphazard appeal to the Sacred Word; or what impression such passages as the above could make on the minds of the inquirers, other than a sad and gloomy one. Their relevance is not in any way indicated in the subsequent history.

Wesley left London on Thursday, March 29, expounded to a small company in the evening at Basingstoke, and reached Bristol on Saturday evening. Whitefield writes, Saturday, March 31.—I was much refreshed with the sight of my honoured friend, Mr. John Wesley, whom I had desired to come hither, and whom I had now the pleasure of introducing to my friends; he having never before been at Bristol.' On Sunday Whitefield preached in the open air, and Wesley remarks, 'I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange My of preaching in the fields, having been all my life, till very lately, so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church.'

In the evening, however, he began to expound our Lord's Sermon on the Mount to a little society that met once or twice a week in Nicholas Street. He thought his subject was a 'pretty remarkable precedent of field preaching.' And on the following day, Monday, April 2, at four in the afternoon, he 'submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation to about three thousand people.' His text on this most interesting occasion was, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

This must be regarded as the supremely momentous step in his evangelistic career, and in the progress of that spiritual revival which was destined to change the entire moral and religious aspect of these islands, to alter the condition of Church life, and to inaugurate an era of religious enthusiasm, of benevolence, and of Christian activity, which found its highest exemplification in the reawakened vitality of the Churches of this land, in the establishment and spread of Churches in the newly rising transatlantic world, and in that outburst of zeal for foreign missions which distinguished the last century.

This opening of the new way was followed by an immediate and widespread activity in the preaching of the gospel, and by some very extraordinary phenomena in the conduct of many of those who heard.

In the evening after the open-air service just referred to, Wesley began expounding the Acts of the Apostles to a society meeting in Baldwin Street; and the next day the Gospel of St. John in the chapel of Newgate, where he also read the morning service of the Church. The day following, at Baptist Mills, he 'offered the grace of God to about fifteen hundred persons.' In the evening of which day three women agreed to meet together to confess their faults one to another, and to pray for one another, that they might be healed; and

four young men also agreed to meet for the same purpose. These meetings were in imitation of the meetings of Peter Bbler's Fetter Lane Society. It is interesting to notice how closely this quite independent society was modelled on the Bbler rules, even to the beginning and meeting on a Wednesday. This was the beginning of an institution which was afterwards to become of so great value in the conservation and extension of the spiritual life amongst the Methodists. He inquires, 'How dare any man deny this to be, as to the substance of it, a means of grace, ordained by God Unless he will affirm with Luther in the fury of his solifidianism, that St. James's Epistle is an epistle of straw' In the next three days he began to expound the Scriptures in three other societies. On the following Sunday he preached at seven o'clock to about a thousand people at Bristol, afterwards to about fifteen hundred on the top of Hanham Mount in Kingswood, and to about five thousand more in the afternoon at Rose Green. Being desired on Tuesday to go to Bath, he preached there to about a thousand souls, and the next morning to twice the number; and to an equally large crowd at Baptist Mills in the afternoon. On the following Saturday, April 14, he preached at the poor-house, three or four hundred being within, and more than twice that number without. On Sunday morning at seven he proclaimed the truth to five or six thousand persons; afterwards to three thousand at Hanham Mount; to a crowded congregation at Newgate, after dinner; between five, and six to about five thousand at Rose Green; and concluded the day with an address to one of the societies. On the following Tuesday, at a little society, the weight of the people caused the floor to give way; but soon all were quietly attending to the things that were spoken; later, he expounded at another society. It was now that the strange phenomena began to appear which for a time characterized the services. Wesley gives the following account: 'We then called upon God to confirm His word. Immediately one that stood by, to our no small surprise, cried out aloud with the utmost vehemence, even as in the agonies of: death. But we continued in prayer, till a new song was put in her mouth, a thanksgiving unto our God. Soon after, two other persons were seized with Strong pain, and constrained to roar for the disquietness of their heart. But it was not long before they likewise burst forth into praise to God their Saviour. Another called upon God as out of the belly of hell; and in a short space he also was overwhelmed with joy and love, knowing that God had healed his backslidings. So many living witnesses hath God given, that His hand is still stretched out to heal, and that signs and wonders are even now wrought by His holy Child Jesus.'

Further instances occurred on the following days. In one case 'a young man was suddenly seized with a violent trembling all over, and in a few minutes, the sorrows of his heart being enlarged, sunk to the ground. But we ceased not calling upon God, until He raised him up full of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' On Easter Day, it being a thorough rain, he could only Preach at Newgate at eight in the morning and two in the afternoon; at a house near Hanham Mount at eleven, and in one near Rose Green at five; concluding the day at a society in the evening; when 'many were cut to the heart, and many comforted.' On the next day he went, after repeated invitations, to Pensford, about five miles from Bristol, and asked of the minister leave to preach in the church; but after waiting some time, and no reply being given, he preached 'in an open place'; and in the afternoon, in a convenient place near Bristol, to above three thousand. Again on Tuesday at Bath to about one thousand; at four in the afternoon to the poor colliers at Two Mile Hill in Kingswood; and in the evening at Baldwin Street, when 'a young man, after a sharp, though short, agony, both of body and mind, found his soul filled with peace, knowing in whom he had believed.' Later in the week, while preaching at Newgate, he 'was insensibly led,' he tells us, 'without any previous design, to declare strongly and explicitly that God willeth all men go be thus saved; and to pray that, if this were not the truth of God, He would not suffer the blind to go out of the way; but, if it were, He could bear witness to His word. Immediately one, and another, and another, sunk to the earth: they dropped on every side as thunderstruck. One of them cried aloud. We besought God in her behalf, and He turned her heaviness into joy. A second being in the same agony, we called upon God for her also; and He spoke peace unto her soul.' In the evening, he says, 'I was again pressed in the spirit to declare, that Christ gave himself a ransom for all. And almost before we called upon Him, to set to His seal, He answered. One was so wounded by the sword of the Spirit, that you would have imagined she could not live a moment. But immediately His abundant kindness was showed, and she loudly sang of His righteousness. On Saturday all Newgate rang with the cries of those whom the Word of God cut to the heart, two of whom were in a moment filled with joy.' On the following Sunday he first declared the free grace of God to about four thousand people in Bristol; then at Clifton, at the desire of the minister (Rev. John Hodges) who was ill; thence he returned to a little plain near Hanham Mount, where about three thousand were present. At Clifton, in the afternoon, the church was quite full at prayers and sermon; and the churchyard at a burial which followed. At Rose Green, afterwards, it was computed near seven thousand were gathered; thence he repaired to the Gloucester Lane Society, and afterwards to the first love-feast in Baldwin Street. He might well exclaim, 'O how has God renewed my strength! who used ten years ago to be so faint and weary with preaching twice in one day.'

It would not have excited surprise if these extraordinarily zealous labours had speedily abated; but, although the number of services actually conducted by him may not have been generally quite so numerous (for he often attended the ordinary Church Service morning and evening, wherever he might be, preaching in the open air and to the societies out of Church hours), yet, in other respects, these are but samples of his efforts continued with unwearied devotion to the extremest limit of his physical strength, even to the end of his days.

It is not to be wondered at that many persons were offended at the strange physical phenomena which they witnessed. Amongst them was a physician, who was much afraid there might be fraud or imposture in the case. 'To-day,' Wesley says, 'one whom he [the physician] had known many years was the first while I was preaching in Newgate who broke out into strong cries and tears. He could hardly believe his own eyes and ears. He went and stood close to her, and observed every symptom, until great drops of sweat ran down her face, and all her bones shook. He then knew not what to think, being clearly convinced it was not fraud, nor yet any natural disorder. But when both her soul and body were healed in a moment, he acknowledged the finger of God.' This was probably Dr. Middleton, a Very early friend of the Wesleys in Bristol, whose death Charles Wesley mourned in an elegy of twenty-one verses, the reading of which moved the loving soul of Fletcher to tears. It was probably for him that 'The Physician's Hymn' was written.

On Tuesday, May 1, he writes, "Many were offended again, and, indeed, much more than before. For at Baldwin Street my voice could scarce be heard, amidst the groanings of some, and the cries of others, calling aloud to Him that is mighty to save. I desired all that were sincere of heart to beseech with me the Prince exalted for us, that He would proclaim deliverance to the captives. And He soon showed, that He heard our voice. Many of those who had been long in darkness saw the dawn of a great light, and ten persons, I afterwards found, then began to say in faith, "My Lord and my God." A Quaker, who stood by, was not a little displeas'd "at the dissimulation of those creatures," and was biting his lips and knitting his brows, when he dropped down as thunderstruck. The agony he was in was even terrible to behold. We besought God not to lay folly to his charge. And he soon lifted up his head, and cried aloud, "Now I know thou art a prophet of the Lord."

At Newgate, while they were at prayer, another mourner was comforted; and another also, who had been thrown into perplexity by an opposer. As they rose from giving thanks for this one, another 'reeled four or five steps, and then dropped down.' They prayed with her and left her 'strongly convinced of sin and earnestly groaning for deliverance.' One, who was zealous for the Church sad oppos'd to' all Dissent, being informed that people 'fell into strange fits at the societies,' came to see for himself, and laboured to convince his acquaintance 'it was a delusion of the devil.' But while reading the sermon on 'Salvation by Faith,' 'he changed Colour, fell off his chair, and began screaming terribly, and beating himself against the ground,' his breast heaving, at the same time, as in: the pangs of death, and great drops of sweat trickling down his face. Wesley says, 'We all betook ourselves to prayer. His pangs ceased, and both his body and soul were set at liberty.'

Let Wesley give his own view of these singular occurrences. He writes:

'During this whole time I was almost continually asked, How can these things be To one who had many times wrote to me on this head the sum of my answer was as follows: The question between us turns on matter of fact. You deny that God does now work these effects; at least that He works them in this manner. I affirm both, because I have heard these things with my own ears and seen them with my eyes. I have seen, as far as a thing of this kind can be seen, very many persons changed in a moment, from the spirit of fear, horror, despair, to the spirit of love, joy, and peace; and from sinful desire, till then reigning over them, to a pure desire of doing the will of God. These are matters of fact whereof I have been, and almost daily am, an eye or ear witness. What I have to say touching visions or dreams is this: I know several persons in whom this great change was wrought in a dream, or during a strong representation to the eye of their mind, of Christ either on the cross or in glory. This is the fact; let any judge of it as they please. And that such a change was then wrought appears, not from their shedding tears only, or falling into fits, or crying out: these are not the fruits, as you seem to suppose, whereby I judge; but from the whole tenor of their life, till then many ways wicked, from that time holy, just, and good. I will show you him that was a lion till then, and is now a lamb; him that was a drunkard, and is now exemplarily sober; the whoremonger that was, who now abhors the very garment spotted by the flesh. These are my living arguments for what I assert, viz. that God does now, as aforesaid, give remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, even to us and to our children: yea, and that always suddenly, as far as I have known, and often in dreams or in the visions of God. If it be not so, I am found a false witness before God. For these things I do, and by His grace will, testify.'

Of these strange physical conditions he says :—

'Perhaps it might be because of the hardness of our heart, unready to receive anything unless we see it with our eyes and hear it with our ears, that God, in tender condescension to our weakness, suffered so many outward signs, at the very time when He wrought this inward change, to be continually seen and heard among us. But, although they saw signs and wonders (for so I must term them), yet many would not believe. They could not indeed deny the facts, but they could explain them away. Some said, "These were purely natural effects; the people hinted away, only because of the heat and closeness of the rooms." And these were sure "it was all a cheat; they might help it if they would. Else why were these things only in their private societies Why were they not done in the face of the sun" To-day (Monday, May 21, 1739) our Lord answered for Himself; for while I was enforcing these words, Be still and know that I am God, He began to make bare His arm, not in a close room, neither in private, but in the open air, and before more than two thousand witnesses. One and another and another was struck to the earth; exceedingly trembling at the presence of His power. Others cried with a loud and bitter cry, "What must we do to be saved" And in less than an hour seven persons, wholly unknown to me till that time, were rejoicing and singing, and with all their might giving thanks to the God of their salvation.'

In the evening he was interrupted at Nicholas Street, almost as soon as he had begun to speak, by' the cries of one who was pricked at the heart, and strongly groaned for pardon and peace. He went on to declare what God had already done, in proof of that important truth, that He is 'not willing any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' Another person dropped down close to one who was a strong asserter of the contrary doctrine. While he stood astonished at the sight, a little boy near him was seized in the same manner. A young man who stood behind fixed his eyes on him, and sunk down himself as one dead; but soon began to roar out and beat himself against the ground, so that six men could scarcely hold him. This was Thomas Maxfield, of whom we shall hear more anon. Wesley adds, 'I never saw but one so torn of the evil one. Meanwhile many others began to cry out to the Saviour of all that He would come and help them, insomuch that all the house, and indeed all the street, for some space was in an uproar. But we continued in prayer; and before ten the greater part found rest to their souls.' He was called from supper to one' in a violent agony,' and about twelve o'clock to another. 'I think,' he adds, 'twenty-nine in all had their heaviness turned into joy this day.'

That the people were convicted of sin by the Divine Spirit, through the medium of the Word preached, need not be doubted. But whatever explanations are given of these strange physical phenomena, they cannot be considered as in any way affecting the piety of those who were the subjects of them; nor, in Wesley's view, was there in them any evidence of a changed character, though the character might be changed during their continuance. Perhaps his own words, written at a later Period, will be thought to present as satisfactory an explanation as any that can be given. He says:

'I grant that extraordinary circumstances have attended this conviction in some instances. A particular account of these I have frequently given. While the Word of God was preached, some persons have dropped down as dead; some have been, as it were, in strong convulsions; some roared aloud, though not with articulate voice; and others spoke the anguish of their souls. This is easily accounted for either on principles of reason or Scripture. First, on principles of reason. For how easy is it to suppose that a strong, lively, and sudden apprehension of the heinousness of sin, the wrath of God, and the bitter pains of eternal death, should affect the body as well as the soul, during the present laws of vital union;—should interrupt or disturb the ordinary circulations, and put nature out of its course! Yea, we may question whether, while this union subsists, it be possible for the mind to be affected, in 'so violent a degree, without some or other of those bodily symptoms following. It is likewise easy to account for these things on principles of Scripture. For when we take a view of therein this light, we are to add to the consideration of natural causes, the agency of those spirits who still excel in strength, and, as far as they have leave from God, will not fail to torment whom they cannot destroy; to tear those that are coming' to Christ. It is also remarkable that there is plain Scripture precedent of every symptom which has lately appeared, so that we cannot allow the conviction attended with these to be madness, without giving up both reason and Scripture"

He further grants that "touches of extravagance, bordering on madness," may sometimes attend severe conviction, and that this may be easily accounted for by the present laws of our physical frame. There, fore, he concludes, "it is not strange that some, while under strong impressions of grief or fear, from a sense of the wrath of God, should for a season forget almost all things else, and scarce be able to answer a common question; that some should imagine they see strange sights, or that others should be thrown into great fears. But all these effects vanish away in a moment, whenever the person convinced tastes of the pardoning love of God.'

Various opinions were then, and have ever since been entertained, not as to Wesley's bona fides in his accounts of these singular phenomena this has never been questioned—nor as to the reality of their Occurrence, nor as to the changes wrought in the character and lives of many of the Victims of these strange experiences. But opinions have differed as to their exact nature and chief cause. Southey assails them with severity. He is answered by Watson, and by the editor of one edition of his own work. Charles Wesley was annoyed by them though they occurred sometimes under his own preaching; and he even strove to prevent them, giving instructions at one service that if any were so affected they were to be Carried out of the building, and he reports that on that occasion the bearers were not troubled!

It is not altogether surprising that these effects followed, even if we put aside any reference to superhuman agency. As was shown above, Wesley himself have full recognition to the working of the ordinary laws of human nature, physical and mental. It may be reasonably asked whether there were not sufficient natural causes to account for them to a very large extent. Let it be remembered that there had been a general religious apathy, and even a deep and abounding sinfulness in almost all parts of the land, and that Wesley's preaching was of a peculiarly effective character. If he lacked Whitefield's dramatic picturesqueness, his style was singularly clear, vivid, and incisive. None could misunderstand him. He denounced sin in terms entirely free from equivocation. He appealed with penetrating closeness to the consciences of his hearers, in a large proportion of whom there was the inevitable response of self-condemnation, so that, under his preaching, men and women were deeply convinced of personal sinfulness. Nor did he hide the terrible consequences of wrong-doing, which to him were a dreadful certainty. If he did not pourtray a hell of torments, he proclaimed one. There was no hiding of this awful subject in a maze of indefinite language, but an unhesitating affirmation of it in calm, clear, measured, scriptural terms. For the self-convicted ones there was no hope of exemption. The punishments of sin stood out before them clearly revealed. They could look for nothing but judgment, and a fiery indignation which should devour the adversaries. In a guilty, self-condemning conscience, the fear of an inevitable retribution could but produce overwhelming dread and terror.

But another class of emotions was called into play. With equal clearness, with equally assured confidence, and with an appealing tenderness, he preached to the terror-stricken the Divine love for mankind, and the sufficiency of a Divinely provided atonement for all. Men could not hear Wesley preach, and yet doubt whether God loved them and desired their salvation; or whether He had opened a way to Himself for all. In pitying tones he cried:

'Come all the world, come sinner thou,

All things in Christ are ready now.'

By the vilest and worst, who were in the throes of the keenest anguish, the same message was heard. Amid such revulsions of feeling even a strong self control could hardly preserve a mental equilibrium. Joyous hope succeeding to overwhelming fear; the first throbbings of a faith that looked out with any degree of assurance to the possibility of a certain salvation - all this was sufficient to disturb the balance of otherwise calm and self-controlled people. It cannot be questioned that some instances of these phenomena partook of the

nature of hysteria, or hypochondriasis, conditions of physical prostration and mental exaltation, with lack of both mental and physical control, produced by severe and often prolonged nervous tension, or by strong emotional excitement. To this cause may be attributed the uncontrollable laughter, which Wesley afterwards records, and of which both himself and his brother Charles, on one earlier occasion at least, had become unwilling victims. These conditions are of a most contagious character; the very act of one person being suggestion to another. That they were produced directly by supernatural agency is not quite so clear. Wesley thought that they might arise either from Divine or from diabolical causes; as signs from the one source, or as hindrances, designed to throw discredit upon the whole work, from the other. His brother Samuel ascribed them wholly to the devil. But it may certainly be said that if such mental and physical disturbances are not sufficient wholly to account for these phenomena, they certainly afford suitable conditions for their occurrence.

With a view to the accommodation of the societies in Bristol, it was decided to build a room large enough for their use, and for those who might be disposed to attend with them when the Scriptures were expounded. The first stone of the building was laid on Saturday, May 12, 1739, 'with the voice of praise and thanksgiving.'

The Room—the New Room, as Wesley called it to the end of his days—was somewhat hastily run up, and perhaps too cheaply, with the result that by 1748 it had become so unsafe as to necessitate almost an entire rebuilding. Opportunity was taken greatly to enlarge it, and to secure the present well-known entrance from the Broadmead. The original Horse-fair end, with the 'court' and one of the 'alleys' subsequently mentioned, still remains very little, if at all, changed, though in a sadly dilapidated condition. As will be seen, the money arrangements for meeting the cost of the rebuilding had most fruitful issues in the system of Methodist Church finance. This was the first instance of the erection of any building for the use of Methodist Societies; and, as was to be expected, it called forth various comments amongst Wesley's friends.

Wesley had not at first any expectation or design of being personally engaged either in the expense or in the direction of this work, having appointed eleven feoffees on whom he supposed these burdens would fall. But he quickly discovered his mistake. He found he was obliged to take upon himself the payment of the workmen, so that before he was well aware of it he had contracted a debt of 150. Whitefield and others of his friends in London declined to render any aid whatever, unless the feoffees were discharged, for, according to the existing Deed, they would have all power of control in the use of the building, and could even deny its use to Wesley himself. With their consent, therefore, the Deed was cancelled, and Wesley took the whole burden of the affair upon his own shoulders.

Wesley continued to preach in and around Bristol to attentive or excited crowds. At Bath—'in a meadow on the side of a hill close to the town,' shown in contemporary maps as 'Barton Fields,' which are now covered with the buildings of Gay Street and the Circus—he preached to about a thousand, 'several fine gay things among them;' at Rose Green — Whitefield's 'first field pulpit,' there refuse-heaps from the coal-pits gave him elevation—to the largest congregation he had had there, upwards of ten thousand souls; at King's. Weston-Hill, four or five miles from the Bristol of those days, where two gentlemen in sport sent up many persons from the neighbouring villages, Wesley proclaimed the great truth of Ascension Day. On the following Sunday morning he preached to six thousand persons; then at Hanham, and again in the afternoon at Rose Green to eight or nine thousand; and in the evening they met in the shell of the new Society room. The following day he was earnestly advised not to preach abroad in the afternoon, as there was a combination of several persons who threatened terrible things. The report, however, only brought many of 'the better sort of people (SO called),' and added more than a thousand to the ordinary congregation; 'but none scoffed, or interrupted, or opened his mouth.' A similar report gained him a much larger audience at Bath, 'among whom were many of the rich and great.' He says, 'I told them plainly, the Scripture had concluded them all under sin, high and low, rich and poor, one with another. Many of them seemed to be not a little surprised, and were sinking apace into seriousness, when their champion appeared—the famous Beau Nash, the leader and arbiter of Bath life and fashion —and coming close to me asked, "By what authority I did these things" I replied, "By the authority of Jesus Christ, conveyed to me by the (now) Archbishop of Canterbury, when he laid his hands upon me, and said, "Take thou authority to preach the Gospel."' He said, "This is contrary to Act of Parliament. This is a Conventicle." I answered, "Sir, the Conventicles mentioned in that Act (as the preamble shows) are seditious meetings. But this is not such. Here is no shadow of sedition. Therefore it is not contrary to that Act." He replied, "I say it is. And beside, your preaching frightens people out of their wits." "Sir, did you ever hear me preach" "No." "How, then, can you judge of what you never heard" "Sir, by common report." "Common report is not enough. Give me leave, sir, to ask, is not your name Nash" "My name is Nash." "Sir, I dare not judge of you by common report. I think it is not enough to judge by." Here he paused a while, and having recovered himself, asked, "I desire to know what this people comes here for" On which one replied, "Sir, leave him to me. Let an old woman answer him. You, Mr. Nash, take care of your body. We take care of our souls, and for the food of our souls we come here." He replied not a word, but walked away.'

At this time Wesley was led to think much upon the unusual character of his ministry, and to consider the objections that were urged against it. After much prayer he determined to adhere to the following principles: As to the past, he declares that he acted from a desire to be a Christian (for he did not allow himself to have been one in the fullest sense), and a conviction that whatever he judged to be conducive thereto he was bound to do, and wherever he judged he could best answer this end, thither it was his duty to go. 'On this principle,' he says, 'I set out for America; on this I visited the Moravian Church, and on the same am I ready now (God being my helper) to go to Abyssinia, or China, or whither-soever it shall please God by this conviction to call me.' As to settling in college, he objects that he had no business there, having now no office and no pupils; and as to accepting of a cure of souls, it would be time enough to

consider it when such was offered to him. But if it be asked how on Catholic principles he could justify the assembling of Christians, who were not of his charge, to sing psalms, and pray, and hear the Scriptures expounded, he replies : —

'If by "Catholic principles" you mean any other than Scriptural, they weigh nothing with me. I allow no other rule, whether of faith or practice, than the Holy Scriptures. But on scriptural principles I do not think it hard to justify whatever I do. God in Scripture commands me, according to my power to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another's parish; that is, in effect, to do it at all, seeing I now have no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall. Whom, then, shall I hear God or man If it be just to obey man rather than God, judge you. A dispensation of the gospel is committed to me, and woe is me if I preach not the gospel. But where shall I preach it on the principles you mention Why not in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America: not in any of the Christian parts of the habitable earth For all these are, after a sorts divided into Parishes. If it be said, "Go back, then, to the heathen from whence you came." Nay, but neither could I now on these principles preach to them. For all the heathen in Georgia belong to the parish either of Savannah or Frederica.'

In writing to his brother Charles on the subjects in the June of this year, he says:

'Man commands me not to do this in another's parish; that is, in effect, not to do it at all. If it be just to obey man rather than God, judge ye.

"But" (say they) "it is just that you submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." True; to every ordinance of man which is not contrary to the command of God. But if any man (Bishop or other) ordain that I shall not do what God commands me to do, to submit to that ordinance would be to obey man rather than God.

'And to do this I have both an ordinary call and an extraordinary. My ordinary call is my ordination by the Bishop: "Take thou authority to preach the Word of God." My extraordinary call is witnessed by the works God doeth by my ministry; which prove that He is with me of a truth in this exercise of my office. Perhaps this might be better expressed in another way: God bears witness in an extraordinary manner, that my thus exercising my ordinary call is well pleasing in His sight.' And he closes with the resolute Words, ' God being my helper, I will obey Him still, and if I suffer for it, His will be done.'

'Suffer me now to tell you my principles in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far, I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I-know God has called me to do. And sure I am that his blessing attends it. Great encouragement have I therefore to be faithful, in fulfilling the work He hath given me to do. His servant I am, and as such am employed according to the plain direction of His Word, as I have opportunity of doing good unto all men. And His providence clearly concurs with His word; which has disengaged me from all things else, that I might singly attend on this very thing, and go about doing good.'

Wesley's own words are the best exposition of the remarkable phrase which he here explains, which embraces his commission to preach the gospel, and to preach it to all, and that in any part of the world wherever he might happen to be. He usurped no man's prerogative by this. He always acknowledged the claims of the parish clergy, and wherever he went he would rather preach in the church than anywhere else. Preach he must; he felt he was called of God to do that; and he felt that his call was to meet a necessity which was not met by the parochial clergy or the parochial system. The adopted saying was soon to find its echo in another significant utterance, which expresses a conviction that seems to be already rising within him, that the purpose for which the Methodists were raised up, of whom he was the representative, was ' to reform the nation, particularly the Church; to spread scriptural holiness over the land.'

On the occasion of unveiling the memorial in Westminster Abbey, the late Dean Stanley drew attention to the sculpture which shows Wesley preaching in Epworth churchyard, and he said, ' He took his stand upon his father's tomb—on the venerable and ancestral traditions of the country and the Church. That was the stand from which he addressed the world.' The chosen phrase is sculptured beneath the scene.

Receiving a pressing letter to haste to London, as the brethren in Fetter Lane were in great confusion for want of his presence and advice, he commended his Bristol flock to the grace of God, in whom they had believed, making the hopeful reflection, 'Surely God hath yet a work to do in this place. I have not found such love, no not in England; nor so child-like, artless, teachable a temper as He hath given to this people.'

Arriving in London on Wednesday, June 13, he received the Communion at Islington in the afternoon, visited his mother, and at six warned the women at Fetter Lane, knowing how they had been lately shaken, not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they were of God. At eight he met the brethren, when many misunderstandings and offences, that had crept in among them, were removed, and fellowship was again in a good measure renewed.

On the following day he went with his friend Whitefield to Blackheath, where 12,000 or 14,000 people were gathered. Whitefield

surprised him by asking him to preach, which he did, 'though nature recoiled,' on his favourite subject, 'Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness sanctification, and redemption.' On another occasion he preached at 7 a.m. in Upper Moorfields to 6000 or 7000 people, and at five in the evening to about 15,000.

A week was spent in adjusting the affairs of the societies up and down London. This gave him trouble and great sorrow. In the evening (June 15) he went to a society at Wapping, 'weary in body and faint in spirit.' The Society at Fetter Lane afterwards met to humble themselves before God. 'In that hour,' he says, 'we found God with us, as at the first. Some fell prostrate on the ground. Others burst out, as with one consent, into loud praise and thanksgiving. And many openly testified, there had been no such day as this, since January the first preceding.' On the following day he preached at seven in Moor fields, to 6000 or 7000 people, and at five on Kennington Common to about 15,000, besides attending public services and meetings of the Society.

Scenes similar to those witnessed in Bristol were repeated in London. Wesley says, 'While I was earnestly inviting all sinners to enter into the holiest by the new and living way, many of those that heard began to call upon God with strong cries and tears. Some sunk down, and there remained no strength in them; others exceedingly trembled and quaked; some were torn with a kind of convulsive motion, in every part of their bodies, and so violently that often four or five persons could not hold one of them. I have seen many hysterical and many epileptic fits; but none of them were like these, in many respects. I immediately prayed that God would not suffer those that were weak to be offended. But one woman was offended greatly; being sure "they might help it if they would, no one should persuade her to the contrary," and was got three or four yards, when she also dropped down, in as violent an agony as the rest.' Twenty-six of those who had been thus affected (most of whom during the prayers that were made for them were in a moment filled with peace and joy) promised to call on him the next day. But only eighteen came; by talking closely with whom he found reason to believe, that some of them had gone down to their houses justified. The rest seemed to be patiently waiting for it.

On Monday, June 18, he left London early, and preached in Bristol the next evening to a numerous congregation. Howel Harris called upon him afterwards, and told him he had been much dissuaded from either hearing or seeing him, by many who said all manner of evil of him; but added, 'as soon as I heard you preach, I quickly found what spirit you were of. And before you had done, I was so overpowered with joy and love, that I had much ado to walk home.'

He found that in the brief eight days of his absence disputes had crept into the little society. The next day he therefore showed them what manner of people they were, preaching twice from, 'Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat.' And he was able to report, 'when we met in the evening, instead of reviving the dispute, we all betook ourselves to prayer. Our Lord was with us. Our divisions were healed. Misunderstandings vanished away, and all our hearts were sweetly drawn together, and united as at the first.' Calling upon one who did run well till he was hindered by some of those so-called French prophets, he was answered, 'No; this place is taken for the Germans.'

On Friday, July 18, Wesley says, 'A few of us joined with my mother in the great sacrifice of thanksgiving; and then consulted how to proceed with regard to our poor brethren at Fetter Lane. Lady Huntingdon was also present. We all saw the thing was now come to a crisis, and were therefore unanimously agreed what to do.' Accordingly, on the following Sunday, he went in the evening to the love-feast in Fetter Lane; at the conclusion of which he read a paper to the following effect:

'About nine months ago, certain of you began to speak contrary to the doctrine we had till then received; the sum of what you asserted is this:

'1. That there is no such thing as weak faith; that there is no justifying faith, where there is ever any doubt or fear, or where there is not, in the full sense, a new, a clean heart.

'2. That a man ought not to use those ordinances of God, which our Church terms means of grace, before he has such a faith as excludes all doubt and fear, and implies a new, a clean heart.

'You have often affirmed, that to search the Scriptures, to pray, or to communicate, before we have this faith, is to seek salvation by works; and that till these works are laid aside no man can receive faith.

'I believe these assertions to be flatly contrary to the Word of God. I have warned you hereof again and again, and besought you to turn back to the Law and the Testimony. I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn. But as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains, but that I should give you up to God, You that are of the same judgment, 'follow me.'

He adds, 'I then, without saying anything more, withdrew, as did eighteen or nineteen of the Society" Lady Huntingdon and Charles Wesley's friend, Mr. Seward, were in the company.

On the following Wednesday, July 23, the little Company of seceders met at the Foundery, instead of at Fetter Lane. To them were joined about five and twenty members of Wesley's own little Methodist Society, 'all of whom think and speak the same thing,' together

with seven or eight and forty of the fifty women that were in the 'Band' societies.

Thus closed Wesley's association with the Moravians; a people for whom he had entertained the liveliest affection, to whom he ever acknowledged his deep indebtedness, and with whom, if the simplicity of Christian life, spirit, and doctrine of his first associates had remained untainted by false mystical teachings, he would gladly have continued in fellowship to the end of his days.

It is right to say that Wesley entirely exculpates the Moravian Church from the charge of holding the 'still' doctrines. He says, 'This doctrine, from the beginning to this day, has been taught as [being] the doctrine of the Moravian Church. I think, therefore, it is my bounden duty to clear the Moravians from this aspersion, because I am, perhaps, the only person now in England that both can and will do it.' He attributes the teaching to 'certain men who crept in among them unawares, about September, 1739, while he and his brother were absent.' It was not the Moravian Church that held these views, but certain leading members and officers of it—Molther, Spangenberg, Bray, and others

Tyerman, as we have seen, is plainly in error in naming this as the date of the founding of the Methodist Society. It simply marks the time of Wesley's separation from that of Fetter Lane, which then became wholly Moravian, and has continued to be so to this day. Fetter Lane is now the centre of the British province of the highly honoured Moravian, or United Brethren's, Church, whose widespread Christian activities, purity of doctrine, fervour of missionary zeal, and noble and heroic sacrifice are the admiration of all the Evangelical churches.

Wesley's separation from the Moravians marks an epoch in his career. Hitherto, since his first association with them on his outward voyage to Georgia, he has been led by them, yielding himself with a childlike simplicity to the control of what he judged to be their ripper wisdom in spiritual matters. The fourth section of his Journal, from November, 1739 to September, 1741, which includes the account of the separation, he did not publish till 1744. In the preface, which is dedicated to the 'Moravian Church, more especially that part of it now or lately residing in England,' he states that he had delayed its publication because he loved them, and because he was afraid of creating another obstacle to that union, which (if he knew anything of his own heart) he desired above all things under heaven. He felt, however, at length compelled to speak his sentiments concerning them.

While he felt he must, on grave accounts, maintain his independence of the Moravians, he nevertheless cherished a longing desire to renew his fellowship with them. After meeting Peter Böhler again some little time subsequent to the separation, Wesley wrote, 'I marvel how I refrain from joining these men. I scarce ever see any of them but my heart burns within me. I long to be with them; and yet I am kept from them.' Southey, whom Alexander Knox—himself personally acquainted with Wesley—afterwards convinced of his mistake, is wrong in assigning ambition, on Wesley's part, as the chief reason why he could not longer work harmoniously with the Moravians. Wesley wrote long after, 'There cannot be a greater mistake than this, that I ever did stand out, or that I do so now. There has not been one day for these seven years last past, wherein my soul has not longed for union,' and he declares that 'the body of the Moravian Church, however mistaken some of them are, are in the main, of all whom I have seen, the best Christians in the world.'

Wesley, now separated from the Moravians, henceforth stood alone, thrown upon his own initiative in all his future movements. Whatever advantages he may have gained from his association with them are sacrificed; but he is loosed from bonds that might have restricted him in the great work to which he is destined, and he is freed from the troublous controversies that for some time had weighed so heavily on his spirits, and hampered him in his labours.

The new era opened with a cheerful record. 'At St. Luke's [Old Street, City Road], our parish church,' he says, 'was such a sight as I believe was never seen there before; several hundred communicants, from whose very faces one might judge that they indeed sought Him that was crucified.' The fruits of his labours, and of those of his brother, were not all gathered into their own Society, nor were they all to be found amongst the Moravians. They were also to be seen in the various religious societies, where the brothers still frequently expounded, and in the different parish churches of London.

The assaults which were being made upon the sins of the people were not unattended with difficulty. Opposition in various forms was now beginning to manifest itself. At Long Lane many came to make a disturbance, and put forth a vile woman to begin.' The instant she broke out,' Wesley says, 'I turned full upon her, and declared the love our Lord had for her soul. We then prayed that He would confirm the word of His grace. She was struck to the heart, and shame covered her face. From her I turned to the rest, who melted away like water, and were as men that had no strength.'

He earnestly warned all who had tasted the grace of God, 'Not to think they were justified before they had a clear assurance that God had forgiven their sins, bringing with it a calm peace, the love of God, and dominion over sin. And then not to think themselves anything, but to press forward to be thoroughly renewed in righteousness and true holiness.' These were two central themes in all his teaching.

Forty or fifty of those who were seeking salvation desired leave to spend the night together, at the Society room in the Foundery, in prayer and giving thanks. Before ten o'clock he left them and lay down, but found no settled sleep. Between two and three in the morning he was waked, and entreated to come downstairs, where loud and bitter cries were heard, which increased when he came into

the room and began to pray. But in a short time 'God heard from His holy place.' Sorrow and sighing fled away, and were succeeded by songs of praise. His labours at this time were very great, with his numerous visits to the sick or mournful, his assiduous attention to the societies, and his frequent public services. But, happily, disputes were at an end, at least for a time, and work was only a joy.

On a Sunday in the October following, on his return home from his afternoon service at Kennington, a mob was gathered about the Foundry door, and he had no sooner stepped out of the coach than they quite closed him in. He immediately began to speak to those who were nearest to him, of righteousness and judgment to come. At first not many heard, the noise being so great; but gradually the silence spread farther and farther, till he had a quiet, attentive congregation; and when he left them, they all showed him much love, and dismissed him with a blessing. Two days afterwards many more, coming in among the people 'like lions, in a short space became as lambs; the tears trickling down their cheeks, who at first most loudly contradicted and blasphemed.' Two days later a similar scene occurred. While he was reading a chapter from the Acts, a great number of men made their way into the middle of the room, and began to speak 'big swelling words,' so that his voice could hardly be heard. 'But,' he says, 'immediately after, the hammer of the Word brake the rock in pieces: all quietly heard the glad tidings of salvation, and some, I trust, not in vain.'

As it was almost impossible for him to secure retirement in London, he went to his friend Piers's, at Bexley, where morning and evening he expounded the Sermon on the Mount, and had leisure during the rest of the day for business of other kinds. He afterwards embodied his teaching on the Sermon on the Mount in thirteen discourses, which were included in his early volumes of sermons. They are perhaps the most beautiful examples of ethical teaching he ever penned, and are the best reply to the charge that Methodism had no ethical message. On going to his home in the evening, at the close of a heavy Sabbath's work, he again found 'an innumerable mob round the door, who opened all their throats' the moment they saw him. Desiring the friends who were with him to go into the house, he walked into the midst of the people, proclaiming the name of the Lord, gracious, and merciful, and who repenteth him of the evil. They stood staring at one another. He continued to speak to them, and then exhorted them to join him in prayer. To this they agreed, and he afterwards went undisturbed to the waiting company within.

Two days later, whilst he was preaching, a young man rushed in with others, cursing and swearing vehemently, and so disturbed all near him that they put him out. Wesley, noticing this, called to them to let the young man come in. At the close of the sermon, the intruder declared before them all that he was a smuggler, then going to his evil work. But he now resolved to take the Lord for his God, and to follow his nefarious practices no more. On another Sunday, while Wesley was explaining the difference between being called a Christian and being one indeed, the madness of the people was overcome, so that in a short time they were quiet and attentive and remained so to the end. Once again, while he was preaching, many who were gathered for the purpose endeavoured by shouting to drown his voice, but he 'turned upon them immediately, and offered them deliverance from their hard master.' The Word, he tells us, sank deep into their hearts, and they were silent.

One of the places of public resort, and of evil fame, was Short's Gardens in Drury Lane; thither he went, and, to publicans and sinners gathered together, began declaring that gospel of Christ which is the power of God even unto the salvation of such hearers.

On the following Sunday, he says, 'While I was enforcing that great question, with an eye to the spiritual resurrection, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead" the many-headed east began to roar again. I again proclaimed deliverance to the captives, and their deep attention showed that the Word sent to them did not return empty.'

Thus he began to encounter the violence of rude, unbridled mobs, and learned his power to meet and silence them. This power was remarkable, for he was but short in stature, and it was, as we shall see again and again, heroically displayed in subsequent days, under circumstances of the greatest peril.

The winter of 1740-41 being unusually severe, he set himself to beg clothes from those who could spare them, distributing them amongst the numerous poor of the Society.

Hastening to Bristol, always a journey of two days, to supply the place of his brother, who had gone into Wales on a preaching tour, he spent nine or ten days in speaking personally with as many as he could, also in visiting numbers of sick persons, many of them suffering from 'spotted fever' (probably typhus, or gaol [jail] fever), which had of late been extremely fatal among the Bristol people.

On his return to London, after a fortnight's absence, he found many persons out of work. To meet their wants he engaged a teacher, and taking twelve of the most needy into the Society room, he employed them for four months in carding and spinning cotton; thus both occupying them in useful toil and maintaining them through the cold winter months, at little cost above the produce of their labour.

Many of the Society had grown offended with each other. He brought the accused and accusers face to face, and in the course of the week most of the offences vanished away.

The Journals show that Wesley had frequent occasion to adjust differences, and to exercise discipline amongst the members of his societies. But this will not be thought surprising, nor will it be any reason for disparaging the reality of the work of the Revival, when it is

remembered from what low conditions of life and morals most of them had been rescued, and for how short a time they had been subject to any religious restraint and training; and when, further, it is borne in mind that their daily surroundings were most unfavourable to growth in goodness.

Many displeasing accounts concerning the Society at Kingswood reached him. He therefore left London; and, with considerable difficulty and some danger, by reason of much ice in the ill-made and ill-kept roads, he came again to Bristol, where his brother confirmed the painful reports. He went at once to Kingswood, in the hope of repairing the breaches that had been made in the Society. He began by expounding the Lord's Sermon on the Mount at the morning and evening services, labouring in the daytime to heal the jealousies and misunderstandings that had arisen. The root of the evil revealed itself when, going to meet his friend Cennick, who was returning from a short journey, and desiring to receive him as usual with open arms, he found to his great surprise that Cennick was 'quite cold, so that a stranger would have judged he had never seen me before.' On the following day Cennick told him he could not agree with him any longer, because Wesley did not preach the truth; in particular, with regard to election. Wesley says significantly, 'We then entered a little into the controversy, but without effect.' He found some comfort, however, on the following Sunday evening at the love-feast in Bristol, where seventy or eighty of the Kingswood Society were present. They all returned home together through the knee-deep snow, in the most violent storm of snow and sleet he could remember; but their hearts were warm, and they rejoiced and praised God for the consolation.

In five days, however, he went to preach at the early morning service at Kingswood, when he had to record, 'My congregation was gone to hear Mr. C[ennick], so that, except a few from Bristol, I had not above two or three men, and as many women; the same number I had had once or twice before.'

Here we see the first streak of what was to become a dark cloud overshadowing him for many years—the first indication of what would prove to be one of his heaviest trials; although in meeting it he was to achieve one of his greatest triumphs.

The last hours of the year found the members of the Society with their love greatly confirmed towards each other. And, the house being filled from end to end, they 'concluded the year, wrestling with God in prayer, and praising Him for the wonderful work which he had already wrought upon earth.'

We have now reached a point in Wesley's career when it may be advantageous to pause. We have traced his interesting personal history from his birth to his thirty-eighth year, and, designedly, with some minuteness. We have followed the course of his prolonged spiritual struggle, his final emancipation from gloomy uncertainty, and his entrance into the full enjoyment of the gospel salvation. We have marked his first efforts to promote the moral and spiritual regeneration of his fellow-countrymen, and we have seen the first examples of violent opposition to his work from fierce and brutal mobs. We have witnessed the beginning of the field-preaching; the foundation of the Society; and the partial employment of lay-preachers—the specially distinguishing features of his method. These must all be regarded as preparatory stages in his progress towards the one supreme work of his life—the greatest, the most conspicuous, the most fruitful of all the services rendered by him to the spiritual upheaval of the eighteenth century, namely, his fifty years of unbroken itinerant preaching, forming one continuous appeal to the conscience of the English nation. Whatever else Wesley may have done, this work rises above all. He may have been distinguished as a successful organizer, as a voluminous writer, as the founder of various benevolent institutions; but his chief, his unapproachable, work was his prolonged appeal to the English people.

For the accomplishment of such a work no device could equal the field-preaching; indeed, but for this, there is no probability that the contemplated end could have been attained. No other means could approach it in fitness for reaching the godless, indifferent masses of the people. It brought him face to face with thousands upon thousands of persons who never entered the churches. By this means he met with the brutal and the careless, as well as with the hungry and thirsting ones. Without effort, without will, often in opposition to their will, men heard a voice which arrested them, heard fiery, penetrating words of condemnation and warning. As with magical power, the dark chambers of their hearts were searched, and their inner thoughts were revealed to them; portrayals in which they saw themselves were held up before their eyes. They were arrested, fascinated, by the charm of voice and manner; but much more by convincing words, with which, as with a sword proceeding out of his mouth, the Evangelist cleft asunder their hearts and their thoughts within them. But he who wounded healed. They heard of a Divine love and mercy. It was a new message to them, and was spoken in new tones of tenderness, fervour, and conviction, that melted and humbled and won them.

No voice could speak to the heart of the nation as could the voice of the field-preacher. A hundred devoted parish clergymen, confined within parochial limits, could not have met the necessities of the hour. The sober-minded, decent, respectable people might attend their parish churches; but the foul and the filthy, the profligate and the idle, would not—did not—darken the church doors. These were the classes it was most needful to reach. The sick needed the physician; the lost must be saved. All honour to Wesley that these were the people whom he sought; that amongst these his greatest trophies were won, but they could be won only by field-preaching. And while his practical sagacity in devising methods for the care of his converts excites our admiration, the first place must be assigned to his reiterated appeals in fields, or highways, or inn yards; from tombstone or wall-top, or hillside, or market-cross; amid the noisy rabble, or in the quiet vale, wherever a company could be gathered together; and these appeals were not intermitted for fifty long years, save when he was laid aside by sickness or accident. There is nothing equal to it in the history of British Christianity.

But at present he is under restraint, London and Bristol affording ample scope for all the energies of the two brothers. Here, too, Wesley had, his only buildings. The Societies in them were under his absolute care; and in them he was developing a model Methodism, even as he was striving in Kingswood, a sort of appanage to Bristol, to establish a model Christian school. This may account for his detention up to the present time at these two centres; and they made incredible demands upon his time, his attention, and his strength. For he did not abate his early morning services, his expounding to his own and other societies, or his sermons to the multitudes that gathered in Moorfields and elsewhere in London, or in the open spaces at Bristol.

True, he made brief excursions to Oxford, and to a few towns in the neighbourhood of Bristol, as we have seen. He also paid visits to some towns lying in the path of his journeys between London and Bristol; and he made one short Evangelistic tour in South Wales. But beyond these limits he was unable to pass.

We shall presently see him extending his sphere northwards to Newcastle, and on to Inverness; southwards to Land's End; over the Eastern, Western, and Midland Counties; through Wales and Ireland. And year by year, for five decades, does he direct his steps through the rugged roads, in summer's heat and winter's cold, through seed-time and harvest, with one message—the message of mercy to a guilty people; calling to them as with a trumpet-voice; denouncing their sins, like a prophet of old; demanding their repentance; proclaiming to them pardon and peace, and all with undying fidelity and unwearied toil. It is to the record of these decades that the following chapters will be devoted.

But this strange procedure of preaching in the fields did not fail to excite the most strenuous opposition, chiefly from those whose position and profession would have justified them in hailing it as a valuable subsidiary to their own work. Thus Wesley answers these opponents in one of his Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion:

"But what need is there," say some of a milder spirit, "of this preaching in fields and streets. Are there not churches enough to preach in? No, my friend, there are not; not for us to preach in. You forget; we are not suffered to preach there, else we should prefer them to any places whatever. [This must be borne in mind.] "Well, there are ministers enough without you." Ministers enough, and churches enough! for what to reclaim all the sinners within the four seas? If there were, they would all be reclaimed: therefore it is evident that there are not churches enough. And one plain reason why, notwithstanding all these churches, they are no nearer being reclaimed, is this—they never come into a church, perhaps not once in a twelvemonth, perhaps not for many years together. Will you say (as I have known some tender-hearted Christians), "Then it is their own fault; let them die, and be damned!" I grant it is their own fault; and so it was my fault and yours when we went astray like sheep that were lost. Yet the Shepherd of souls sought after us, and went after us into the wilderness. And "oughtest not thou to have compassion on thy fellow-servants, as he had pity on thee?" Ought not we also "to seek," as far as in us lies, "and to save that which is lost?"

'Behold the amazing love of God to the outcasts of men! His tender condescension to their folly! They would regard nothing done in the usual way. All this was lost upon them. The ordinary preaching of the Word of God they would not even deign to hear. So the devil made sure of these careless ones; for who should pluck them out of his hand? Then God was moved to jealousy, and went out of the usual way to save the souls He had made. Then, over and above what was ordinarily spoken in His name in all the houses of God in the land, He commanded a voice to cry in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

'Consider coolly, if it was not highly expedient that something of this kind should be Had the minister of the parish preached like an angel, it had profited them nothing; for they heard him not. But when one came and said, "Yonder is a man preaching on the top of the mountain," they ran in droves to hear what he would say; and God spoke to their hearts. It is hard to conceive anything else which could have reached them. Had it not been for field-preaching, the uncommonness of which was the very circumstance that recommended it, they must have run on in the error of their way, and perished in their blood.'