

## England: The Spiritual Conflict (1738)

AFTER more tossings and threatenings of trouble, on Sunday, January 29, they came safely into the Downs; and early on Wednesday morning, February 1, Wesley landed at Deal. There he learned that, the day before, his friend Whitefield had sailed for Savannah, neither knowing anything of the other. Yes; Whitefield had begun his mighty and extraordinary' ministry, his heart almost bursting with the Gospel joy', which his friend was labouring to find, and in his exuberant gladness was already pouring out his life in service as happy as it was wondrous. He describes thus his last Sabbath before he set sail. 'Sunday, January 29.—Went on board early in the morning, read prayers, and preached to the soldiers, and visited the sick; then returned on shore, and hastened with a troop of pious friends [who had gathered from far to bid him farewell] to Shrouden [Sholden] church, about a mile and half distant from Deal, where I preached to a thronged and weeping congregation. In the afternoon I preached at Upper Deal church, which was quite crowded, and many went away for want of room; some stood on the leads of the church on the outside, and looked in at the top windows, and all seemed eager to hear the Word. May the Lord make them doers of it! In the evening I was obliged to divide my hearers into four companies, and was enabled to expound to them from six till ten. Lord, keep me from being weary of, or in, well-doing.' A specimen of the life-consuming labours of this extraordinary man.

Thus were the men, who were afterwards to become so remarkable in the history of the Church of God in England, linked together in the benevolent colonizing experiment and missionary effort on the distant shores of America. Wesley landed at Deal at four o'clock in the morning of February 1, 1738, after an absence from England of rather more than two years. He had made very great, if unconscious, progress in spiritual knowledge during that time. His zeal, so far from suffering abatement by the things he had suffered, had been kindled to a yet greater intensity. On the morning of his arrival he read prayers and explained a portion of Scripture to a large company at the inn. Reaching Faversham, he read prayers and expounded the second lesson to a few, 'called Christians, but more savage in their behaviour,' he was compelled to observe, 'than the wildest Indians' he had met with. He visited the home of his friend Delamotte, at Blendon, receiving a very hearty welcome. On the 3rd he reached London. In addition to the many subjects which he had so carefully pondered during his voyage, he, as might have been expected, thoughtfully reviewed the results of his residence and work in America. He had more than once deplored his failure to accomplish his purpose of becoming a missionary to the Indians; and he could hardly look upon his labours amongst the English with perfect satisfaction. But all was not failure; and he was enabled to express his thankfulness that he had been carried into that strange land, contrary to all his preceding resolution, and that though the chief design of his going did not take effect—the preaching of the Gospel to the native tribes of North America—yet he had derived much personal profit; he had been humbled and proved; he had learned to beware of men; to know assuredly that if in all our ways we acknowledge God, He will, where reason fails, direct our path 'by lot or by other means.' He was also delivered from the fear of the sea, which he had dreaded from his youth. It had been given to him to know many servants of God, particularly those of the Church of Herrnhut. By his studies in the German, Spanish, and Italian languages his way had been opened to the writings of these tongues. Moreover, all in. Georgia had heard the Word of God, which some had believed, and had begun to run well; and few steps had been taken towards the preaching of the gospel to the African and American heathen. Many children had learned how they ought to serve God, and to be useful to their neighbours. Besides, they whom it most concerned had now an opportunity, through his reports, of knowing the true state of the infant colony, and so the firm foundation of peace and happiness might be laid for many following generations. These were not inconsiderable fruits of his expedition.

But very real results were traceable by others; Whitefield reached Savannah on May 7. On June 2 his friend Delamotte left for England. 'The good people,' Whitefield says, 'lamented the loss of him, and went to the water-side to take a last farewell, and good reason they had to do so; for he had been indefatigable in feeding Christ's lambs with the sincere milk of the Word, and many of them (blessed be God) have grown thereby. Surely I must labour most heartily, since I come after such worthy predecessors. The good Mr. John Wesley has done in America, under God, is inexpressible. His name is very precious among the people; and he has laid such a foundation, that I hope neither men nor devils will ever be able to shake. Oh, that I may follow him as he has Christ.'

Many of the incidents in Wesley's life during his missionary career are of thrilling interest, but to the biographer the spiritual struggle through part of which he passed, with its hidden subtle forces, must be held to be of primary import. It was a silent formative process, by which this great servant of God was being prepared for his supreme work, that of an active evangelization throughout the British Isles. That process must be carefully traced, if we would understand Wesley and his place in the Church's history. He has recorded it with some minuteness, as we have seen. It is only necessary here to add that his high church views have received a very severe shock, and that he has passed, to a large degree, from under their dominance to that of the Moravian teaching. The Oxford Don, who, keeping up the traditions of his childhood, would do nothing 'without a reason,' has learned in great exigencies of his life to decide his course by lot!

'Wesley's voyages to and fro, and the months of his stay in the colony, were incidentally important in bringing him within the circle of the Moravian influence. It was in that circle that the new and strange idea first met him of a Christianity more elevated and excellent than his own. One or two of the Moravian ministers were—and he felt it—far advanced in knowledge and experience beyond his own rate of attainment. At Oxford he had found himself stepping forward always in front of those around him. But on board the ship on which he

crossed the Atlantic, and afterwards in the colony, he met with men who, without assuming a tone of arrogance towards him, spoke to him as to a novice, and who, in the power of truth, brought his conscience to a stand by questions which, while he admitted the pertinence of them, he could not answer with any satisfaction to himself. Thus it was that he returned to England in a state of spiritual discomfort and destitution. He had been stripped of that overweening religiousness upon which, as its basis, his ascetic egotism had hitherto rested. He rejoined his friends in a mood to ask and receive guidance, rather than to afford it.'

Wesley immediately begins to preach in the London churches. But his experience on the first Sabbath was indicative of what awaited him. He was desired to preach at St. John the Evangelist's. He did so, on the words, 'If any man be in Christ he is a new creature,' and was afterwards informed that many of the best of the parish were so offended that he was not to preach there any more. He now visited many of his old friends and relations, to his great joy and comfort.

Wesley marks Tuesday, February 7, as 'a day much to be remembered,' for on this day he met Peter Böhler, at the house of Mr. Weynanz (or Weinantz), a Dutch merchant, Wesley delivering to him a letter addressed to Zinzendorf, which he had brought from John Toltschig, a Moravian minister, whose acquaintance Wesley had formed in Georgia. Böhler was a chosen agent of God in leading him to the light he was then seeking. With two other representatives of the Moravian Church, Böhler had just arrived in England, and Wesley procured for them lodgings near Mr. Hutton's, where he himself was staying; and he lost no opportunity, he tells us, of conversing with them while he remained in London. He waited on the Georgian Trustees with his report of the colony, which he had reason to believe was not acceptable to many of them, as it differed greatly from reports they had generally received. He then, in company with Böhler, set out for Oxford, where they were received by the only one<sup>1</sup> remaining there, he says, of many who, at his embarking for America, were used to take sweet counsel together and rejoice in bearing<sup>2</sup> the reproach of Christ. While in Oxford they were often the objects of ridicule and derisive laughter. Böhler one day perceiving that Wesley was troubled by it on his account, said, with a smile, 'My brother, it does not even stick to our clothes.' They together visited his friend Gambold, and found him<sup>3</sup> recovered from his mystic delusion, and convinced that Paul was a better writer than either Tauler or Behmen.<sup>4</sup> All this time he conversed much with Böhler, whom he confesses he did not understand, and especially when he said, *Mi frater, mi frater, excoquenda est ista tua philosophia.* 'My brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away.' Latin was the medium of intercourse, Böhler not understanding English. Böhler, writing to Zinzendorf, says, 'I travelled with the two brothers, John and Charles Wesley, from London to Oxford. The elder, John, is a good-natured man. He knew that he did not properly believe in the Saviour, and was willing to be taught.' He now returned to London; and, after meeting his mother once more, set out again to Oxford, called thither by the report that his brother was dying. On his way he spoke plainly to several well-wishers to religion, and in the evening to the servants and strangers at the inn. He then resolves, with regard to his own conduct:

'1. To use absolute openness and unreserve, with all I should converse with.

'2. To labour after continual seriousness, not willingly indulging myself in any the least levity of behaviour, or in laughter, no, not for a moment.

'3. To speak no word which does not tend to the glory of God; in particular, not to talk of worldly things. Others may, nay must, But what is that to thee and

'4. To take no pleasure which does not tend to the glory of God; thanking God every moment for all I do take, and therefore rejecting every sort and degree of it which I feel I cannot so thank Him in and for.'

He found his brother with Peter Böhler,<sup>1</sup> by whom during a quiet walk in the evening of the following day he was 'Convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved.' Böhler says, 'I took a walk with the elder Wesley, and asked him about his spiritual state. He told me that he sometimes felt certain of his salvation, but sometimes he had many doubts; that he could only say this, "If what stands in the Bible be true, then I am saved." Thereupon I spoke with him very fully, and earnestly besought him to go to the opened fountain, and not to mar the efficacy of free grace by his unbelief.' Immediately, he says, it struck into his mind to leave off preaching, for how could he preach to others who had not faith himself! Appealing to Böhler, he received for answer, 'By no means: preach faith till you have it, and then, because you have it, you will preach it.'<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, Mon., Mar. 6, I began preaching this new doctrine, though my soul started back from the work. The first person to whom I offered Salvation by Faith alone, was a prisoner under sentence of death. His name was Clifford. Peter Böhler had many times desired me to speak to him before. But I could not prevail on myself so to do; being still, as I had been many years, a zealous asserter of the impossibility of a death-bed repentance.<sup>3</sup> This is one of the critical hours in Wesley's life. What a revelation his words contain! He had never before preached salvation by faith alone! He had never before believed salvation was thus obtainable! What light is here thrown upon his past efforts! He might now say truly, 'The faith I want is—this.'

Böhler returned to London, and Wesley set out to visit his friend Clayton at Manchester, with Mr. Kinchin, Fellow of Corpus Christi, and Mr. Fox, late a prisoner in the city prison. They fully determined to lose no opportunity of awakening, instructing, or exhorting any whom they might meet in their journey; but, neglecting their duty in Birmingham, they were 'reproved by a severe shower of hail.' In the evenings, at the inns where they stayed, they held family prayer, with reading and exposition of the Scriptures, with all who were willing to join. On returning to Oxford, he met Peter Böhler again, who now amazed him more and more by the accounts which he gave of the

holiness and happiness attending living faith. He then began again the examination of the Greek Testament, resolved to abide by the law and the testimony, and being confident he would hereby be taught whether this doctrine was of God.

He preached at Whitham on 'the new creature,' and went in the evening to a society in Oxford, where, as his manner there was at all the societies, after using a collect or two and the Lord's Prayer, he expounded a chapter in the New Testament, concluding with three or four more collects and a psalm. At the Castle, after reading prayers and preaching, he and his companion Kinchin prayed with a condemned criminal, 'first in several forms of prayer, and then in such words as were given us in that hour.' 'The prisoner kneeled down in much heaviness and confusion, having no rest in his bones by reason of his sins.' After a space he rose up, and eagerly said, 'I am now ready to die. I know Christ has taken away my sins, and there is no more condemnation for me.' The same composed cheerfulness he showed when he was carried to execution; and in his last moments he was the same, enjoying a perfect peace, in confidence that he was 'accepted in the beloved.' This arrests Wesley's attention. It was a case in point for him; a case of sudden conviction of sin, followed by conviction of pardon, and accompanied even in that solemn hour with the most assured peace and joy. But Wesley could not say, with the poor criminal for whom he had prayed, 'I know that Jesus Christ has taken away my sins.' He was, however, approaching the happy hour! At another society, he says his heart was so full that he could not confine himself to the forms of prayer generally in use; and he resolved in future to pray indifferently, with a form or without, as should seem suitable.

Six days after, on Easter Day, April 5, he preached in the college chapel, and again in the afternoon at the Castle, and at Carfax; and he wrote, 'I see the promise, but afar off;' and, judging it to be better for him to wait for its fulfilment in silence and retirement, he withdrew, at his friend Kinchin's desire, to Dummer, in Hampshire. But in a few days he was summoned to London, where he met Böhler again; and confessed he had now no objection to what he said of the nature of faith, that, in the words of the Homily, it was 'a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God;' But he could not comprehend what was said of an instantaneous work. Searching the Scriptures, however, he found, to his utter astonishment, scarce any instances there of other than instantaneous conversions. His only retreat now was, 'Thus it was in the first ages of Christianity, but what is the evidence that God works in the same manner now?' But on the following day he was beaten out of this by the concurring evidence of several living witnesses, who testified God had thus wrought in them, giving them in a moment such a faith in the blood of His Son as translated them out of darkness into light, out of sin and fear into holiness and happiness.

The following interesting account of this incident is given by Böhler:—

'I took four of my English brethren to John Wesley...that they might relate their experience to him, how the Saviour so soon and so mightily has compassion, and accepts the sinner. They told, one after another, what had been wrought in them; Wolff especially, in whom the change was quite recent, spoke very heartily, mightily, and in confidence of his faith. John Wesley and those that were with him were as if thunderstruck at these narrations. I asked John Wesley what he then believed. He said four examples were not enough to prove the thing. To satisfy his objections, I replied, I would bring eight more here in London. After a short time he stood up, and said, "We will sing that hymn, Hier egt mein Sinn sich vor dir nieder" [By C. F. Richter]:

My soul before Thee prostrate lies,

To Thee her source my spirit flies,

My wants I mourn, my chains I see:

O, let Thy presence set me free!

'During the singing of the Moravian version,' Böhler continues, 'he often wiped his eyes. Immediately after he took me alone into his own room, and declared, "that he was now satisfied of what I said of faith, and that he would not question any more about it; that he was clearly convinced of the want of it; but how could he help himself, and how could he obtain such faith? He was a man that had not sinned so grossly as other people." I replied that it was sin enough that he did not believe on the Saviour: he should not depart from the door of the Saviour until He helped him. I was very much pressed to pray with him; therefore I called upon the bleeding name of the Saviour to have compassion on this sinner .... Afterwards he told me what contradictions he had met with from the pious clergy with whom he had taken counsel, because he had by opportunity told them what he knew, and what he still wanted; but he was not concerned at it. He asked me, moreover, what he should do at this time, whether he should tell all the people his present state or not? I replied that in this I could give him no rule; that he might do what the Saviour might teach him; that he must not set the faith as it is in Jesus so far from him, but believe that it might be nearer; that Jesus' heart still stands open, and that His mercy towards him is great. He wept heartily and bitterly, as I spoke to him on this matter, and [insisted that] I must pray with him. I can say of him, he is truly a poor sinner, and has a contrite heart, hungering after a better righteousness than that he has till now possessed.

'In the evening he preached from 1 Cor. i. 23: "But we preach Christ crucified," etc. He had above four thousand hearers, and spoke upon this subject until the congregation was astonished, because no one had ever heard such things from him. His first words were, "I hold myself from my very heart unworthy to preach the crucified Jesus."'

'Here,' Wesley says, 'ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, Lord, help Thou my unbelief.' This was for him a time of great spiritual conflict. He was passing through a strait gate. Since his intercourse with the Moravians he had been gradually led to see that he had been putting much confidence in his strict attention to the performances of religion. In assigning to these their proper place and proportion there is no need to minify their importance. Wesley's danger was in their exaggeration. One striking feature of his training hitherto had been the reduction of his entire conduct to rule; so that the individual hours of the day', and even separate portions of the same hour, had each its allotted task. In his pocket-diary, kept with the greatest precision for many years, the occupation even of minutes is recorded. His whole conduct, his words, his very thoughts were under control, and were regulated by laws, which he was strict to observe, and every departure from which gave him pain.

Never was a man more resolute in this process of self-control and self-discipline. He had long accustomed himself, to frequent interrogations as to his fidelity. Precise questions were drawn up and faithfully proposed at stated times, of which examples have been given. He was a most rigid 'Methodist' even before that name, as a stigma, was attached to him. He was not without light and comfort, but he was gradually being led to see that he was far from the perfect light and rest of the gospel. That light, however, was dawning upon him. Whether it must be said that he was or was not a true Christian is in great part a question of definition. How much is included in being a Christian He had faith, but it was not the perfect faith. It was not the faith that brings assurance. He was a good man, He was in many respects a very saint, a pattern to believers; but, withal, he had not yet attained. He was in the light, but it was not the perfect day. He had rest, but it was unsettled, unassured. There was yet a further, a happier stage. I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it. For whosoever hath it is freed from fear, having peace with God through Christ, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. And he is freed from doubt, having the love of God shed abroad in his heart.'

How shall it be explained that Wesley, after so many years of earnest seeking, failed to find the gospel salvation He had been in the ministry more than twelve years. He was diligent in the discharge of every duty; he fasted and prayed and gave alms; he attended with scrupulous care on all the means of grace, including a frequent attendance at the Lord's table; he laboured assiduously, even to the utmost of his strength, for the welfare of others. Yet he had not found the peace of the gospel How was this Would not his own answer be, Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law (Rom. ix. 31, 32, R.V.).

He now became persuaded that this faith is the gift of God, and that God would surely bestow it upon every soul who earnestly and perseveringly sought it; and he resolved, by the grace of God to seek it unto the end, (I). By absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part upon my own works or righteousness, on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up.' (How true! This confession is exceedingly impressive.) '(2) By adding to the constant; use of all the other means' of grace a continual prayer for this very thing, justifying, saving grace, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for me, a trust in Him as my Christ, as my sole justification, sanctification, and redemption.'

It is needful to give careful attention to these details in Wesley's spiritual struggle, for without regard being paid to them, neither he nor his future work can be understood. After a time he looked back, as his followers do now, to one supreme and critical hour of his life; an hour for which years of training prepared him, an hour which in his religious history is invested with a significance which it would be foolish to ignore, and almost as foolish to diminish. The period now under consideration is an integral and important part of the preparation for that hour. lie was being taught, and by efficient, if humble teachers. On many subjects he needed no tutor, he himself could teach. But here he is a learner. How often has a child of the kingdom led the fullgrown seeker to its gates!

He again hesitated to teach, but was instructed not to hide in the earth the talent God had given him. Consequently he spoke clearly and fully at Blendon to Mr. Delamotte's family of the nature and fruits of faith. Mr. Broughton and his brother were there. The former objected, 'He could never think that I had not faith, who had done and suffered such things.' In after years Wesley added, 'He was in the right. I certainly then had the faith of a servant, though not the faith of a son.' His brother was very angry, and told him he did not know what mischief he had done by talking thus, Wesley adds, 'And, indeed, it did please God then to kindle a fire which I trust shall never be extinguished.'

He was again urged by Bbler not to stop short of the grace of God. At Gerrard's Cross he plainly declared the faith as it is in Jesus; as he did the next day to a young man he overtook On the road, and in the evening to his friends at Oxford. In the day or two following he was much confirmed in the truth by the experiences of two of his college friends, who witnessed that God can, if He does not always, give that faith whereof cometh salvation in a moment, as lightning fallen from heaven.

Hastening to London on account of his brother's health, he found him better as to his health than he expected, but strongly averse to what he called 'the New Faith.'

Wesley writes, 'On May 1 [1738] our little society began, which afterwards met in Fetter Lane.' It has usually been supposed that they met in Neville's Court, in an old dingy chapel probably erected in the days of Charles II. This was the first home of the Methodists in London, and around it many interesting incidents connected with early Methodism cluster. It was at this place that Lord and Lady Huntingdon first attended the society's meetings; and Sir John Phillips and Sir John Thorold were awakened here, and became members

of the Fetter Lane Society, The little society named by Wesley has been erroneously called a Moravian Society. It is true that its rules a were drawn up in harmony with the advice of Peter Bbler. But Wesley had already had experience in the formation of societies. It was a Church of England Society; one added to the many, religious societies then existing in London and elsewhere. It so continued until a Moravian teacher, Molther, spread his peculiar views amongst the members, thus leading to Wesley's separation from it, to which future reference will be made. Whitefield, a year after the above date, records in his Journal:

1. Sun., May 20: Went with our brethren of Fetter Lane Society to St. Paul's, and received the holy faults one to another, and pray one for another, that we may be healed.
2. That all persons so meeting be divided into several bands or little companies, none of them consisting of fewer than five, or more than ten persons.
3. That every one ill order speak as freely, plainly, and concisely as he can the real state of his heart, with his several temptations and deliverances since the last time of meeting.
4. That all the bands have a conference at eight every Wednesday evening, begun and ended with singing and prayer.
5. That all who desire to be admitted into this society be asked, what are your reasons for desiring this Will you be entirely open, using no kind of reserve Have you any objection to any of our orders (Which may then be read.)
6. That when any new member is proposed, every one present speak clearly and freely whatever objection he has to him
7. That those against whom no reasonable objection appears, be, in order for their trial, formed into one or more distinct bands, and some person agreed on to assist them.
8. That after two month's trial, if no objection then appear, they may be admitted into the society.
9. That every fourth Saturday be observed as a day of general intercession.
10. That on the Saturday seven-night following be a general love-feast, from seven till ten in the evening.
11. That no particular member be allowed to act in anything contrary to any order of the society; and that if any persons after being thrice admonished do not conform thereto, they be not any longer esteemed as members. Sacrament, as a testimony that we adhered to the Church of England.' Three weeks afterwards, Charles Wesley writes, 'Bro. Hall proposed expelling Shaw and Wolf. We consented nem. con. that their names should be erased out of the Society-book, because they disowned themselves members of the Church of England.'

It is an interesting fact that Wesley marks the formation of this society as the beginning of the present-day Methodism. In his Short History of the People called Methodists he says, ' On Monday, May 1, 1738, our little society began in London. But it may be observed, the first rise of Methodism, so called, was in November, 1729, when four of us met together in Oxford; the second was at Savannah, in April, 1736, when twenty or thirty persons met at my house; the last was in London, on this day, when forty or fifty of us agreed to meet together every Wednesday evening, in order to a free conversation, begun and ended with singing and prayer. In all our steps we were greatly assisted by the advice and exhortations of Peter Bbler, an excellent young man, belonging to the society commonly called Moravians.' It is observable that here he distinguishes between 'Methodism, so called' and the 'society commonly called Moravian.' Future reference will be made to this society.

On May 3 Peter Bbler had a long conversation with Charles Wesley, when, John Says, ' It pleased God to open his eyes so that he also saw clearly what was the nature of that one, true, living Faith, whereby alone, through grace, we are saved.' On the following day Bbler left London for Carolina, and Wesley writes, 'O what a work has God begun, since his coming into England! Such an one as shall never come to an end, till heaven and earth pass away.'

Preaching 'free salvation by faith in the blood of Christ' in several churches in London, Wesley is apprized at almost all that he can preach there no more. He records that Rev. G. Stonehouse, Vicar of Islington, was convinced of the truth as it is in Jesus. For some days he was sorrowful and very heavy, unable to read or meditate, to sing or pray, or do anything; but was somewhat revived by a tender and affectionate letter from his friend Bbler, urging him not to delay to believe in 'your Jesus Christ; declaring' how great, how inexpressible, how unexhausted is His love. Surely He is now ready to help; and nothing can offend Him but our unbelief.'

On Monday, May 19, Wesley makes the following entry in his Journal:—' My brother had a second attack of his pleurisy. A few of us spent Saturday night in prayer. The next day being Whit Sunday, after hearing Dr. Heylin preach a truly Christian sermon (on They were all filled with the Holy Ghost; "and so," said he, "may all you be, if not it is your own fault"), and assisting him at the Holy Communion (his

curate being taken ill in the church), I received the surprising news that my brother had found rest to his soul. His bodily strength also returned from that hour. Who is so great a God as our God!

His heaviness and sorrow of heart returning, he breaks forth in the following passionate words in a letter to a friend:—

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

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

'O let no one deceive us with vain words, as if we had already attained this faith! By its fruits ye shall know. Do we already feel peace with God and joy in the Holy Ghost! Does His Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Alas! with mine He does not.'

These were among his last words before the memorable change took place. They show most plainly that there was one definite step which he had not yet taken, though he longed to take it—one state which he had not entered, although his utmost desire was to enter. But the gate is open to admit him to that realm of peace and joy whither he would be; and his foot is lifted to take the final step and to enter. It is right that he should in his own words declare what took place on that momentous Wednesday, May 24, 1738. After a review of his life from his tenth year, he writes: —

'I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on those words: 'here are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. i. 4). Just as I went out, I opened it again on these words, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul's. The anthem was, "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. O let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done miss, O Lord, who may abide it For there is mercy with Thee; therefore Thou shalt be feared. O Israel, trust in the Lord: for with the Lord here is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins."

'In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society [then meeting in Trinity Hall] in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

'I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, "This cannot be Faith; for Where is thy joy" Then was I taught that peace and victory 'over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation: Buts that as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them, according to the counsels of His own will.' He adds, 'After my return home [to Mr. Bray's, in Little Britain, near Trinity Hall], I was much buffeted with temptations: but cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and He sent me help from His holy place. And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not Often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror.'

Thursday, May 25, he writes, 'The moment I awaked; "Jesus, Master," was in my heart and in my mouth: and I found all my strength lay in keeping my eye fixed upon Him, and my soul waiting on Him continually. Being again at St. Paul's in the afternoon, I could taste the good word of God in the anthem, which began, "My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord: with my mouth will I ever be showing forth thy truth from one generation to another." Yet the enemy injected a fear, "If thou dost believe, why is there not a more sensible change" I answered (yet not I)," That I know not. But this I know, I have now peace with God: and I sin not to-day, and Jesus my Master has forbidden me to take thought for the morrow."'

The next day he says, 'My soul continued in peace, but yet in heaviness, because of manifold temptations. I asked Mr. Tltschig, the Moravian, what to do. He said, "You must not fight with them, as you did before, but flee from them, the moment they appear, and take shelter in the wounds of Jesus." The same I learned also from the afternoon anthem, which was, "My soul truly waiteth still upon God: f6r from Him cometh my salvation; He is my defence; so that I shall not greatly fall. O put your trust in Him always, ye people; pour out your hearts before Him; for God is our hope."'

For some days he walked as a little child, with trembling, and with doubts and fears and subtle temptations assailing him; nor was he free from external Opposition. He found a refuge in earnest prayer, in diligent reading of the Scriptures, and in active Christian work. During this time he narrowly watched the varying states of mind through which he was passing. He writes, May 27, 'Believing one reason of my want of joy was want of time for prayer, I resolved to do no business till I went to church in the morning, but to continue pouring out my heart before God. And this day my spirit was enlarged. So that, though I was now assaulted by many temptations, I was more than conqueror, gaining more power thereby to trust and to rejoice in God my Saviour. 28. —I waked in peace, but not in joy. In the same even, quiet state I was till the evening, when I was roughly attacked in a large company [at Mrs. Hutton's house] as an Enthusiast, a Seducer, and a Setter forth of new Doctrines. By the blessing of God I was not moved to anger, but after a calm and short reply went away; though not with so tender a concern as was due to those who were seeking death in the error of their life.'

The critical writers on Wesley's life have almost wholly overlooked the significance of the event he have just reviewed; but it did not escape the keen discernment of Lecky, who writes, 'It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the scene which took place at that humble meeting in Aldersgate Street forms an epoch in English history. The conviction which then flashed upon one of the most powerful and most active intellects in England is the true source of English Methodism.'

Charles Wesley, like his brother, had long been earnestly seeking 'redemption.' He was at this time seriously ill, and was lodging with a Mr. Bray, whom he describes as 'a poor ignorant mechanic, who knows nothing but Christ.' Bray was a happy believer, a Moravian, to whom Charles Wesley became closely attached. Of him he wrote, 'Mr. Bray is to supply Bhlér's place. We prayed together for faith. I was quite overpowered, and melted into tears.'

It appears that a spirit of inquiry on the subject of religion was at this time extensively excited in London, partly by the recent preaching of Whitefield, partly by the private labours of Peter Bhlér, who had lately left London, and partly by the preaching of John Wesley, who was admitted into several of the London pulpits, and was followed by immense crowds of people.

On May 17, Charles writes:

'To-day I first saw Luther on the Galatians. We began, and found him nobly full of faith. I marvelled that we were so soon and so entirely removed from him that Called us into the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel. Who would believe our church had been founded upon this important article of justification by faith alone... I spent some hours this evening in private with Martin Luther, who was greatly blessed to me, especially his conclusion of the second chapter. I laboured, waited, and prayed to feel, "who loved me and gave himself for me." When nature, near exhausted, forced me to bed, I opened the book upon, "For He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness, because a stork work will the lord make upon the earth." After this comfortable assurance that He would come and not tarry, I slept in peace .... About midnight I was waked by a return of my pleurisy. I felt great pain, and straitness at my heart; but found immediate relief by bleeding. I had some discourse with Mr. Bray: thought myself willing to die the next moment, if I might but believe this: but was sure I could not die, till I did believe. I earnestly desired it .... At five this morning the pain and difficulty in breathing returned. The surgeon was sent for; but I fell asleep before he could bleed me a second time. I received the Sacrament, but not Christ. Mrs. Turner came, and told me I should not rise from that bed till I believed. I believed her saying, and asked, "Has God then bestowed faith upon you " "Yes, He has" "Why, have you peace with God" "Yes, perfect peace." "And do you love Christ above all things" "I do, above all things incomparably." "Then are you willing to die" "I am, and would be glad to die this moment; for I know all my sins are blotted out; the handwriting that was against me is taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross. He has saved me by His death; He has washed me with His blood He has hid me in His wounds. I have peace in him, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Her answers were so full to these and the most searching questions I could ask, that I had no doubt of her having received the atonement: and waited for it myself with a more assured hope. Feeling an anticipation of joy upon her account, and thanking Christ as I could, I looked for him all night, with prayers, and sighs, and unceasing desires.'

The frequent returns of his pleurisy, and his very enfeebled state, appear to have alarmed his friends, who began to be apprehensive that his end was near. His brother, therefore, and a few others, met together on Saturday evening, and spent the night in prayer. The next day was Whir Sunday. He says, 'I waked in hope and expectation of His coming. At nine my brother and some friends came, and sang a hymn to the Holy Ghost. My comfort and hope were hereby increased. In about half an hour the}, went. I betook myself to prayer: the substance as follows: O Jesus, Thou hast said I will come unto you. Thou hast said, I will send tie Comforter unto you. Thou hast said, My Father and I will come unto you, and make our abode with you. Thou art God, who canst not lie. I wholly rely upon Thy most true promise. Accomplish it in Thy time and manner.' Having said this, he was composing himself to sleep, in quietness and peace, when he heard one, who had come into the room, say, 'In the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise, and believe, and thou shalt be healed of all thine infirmities.' The words struck him to the heart. He sighed, and said within himself, 'O that Christ would but thus speak to reel' Presently, sending to make inquiries who had spoken the words that had so affected him, he says, 'I felt in the mean time a strange palpitation of heart, and said, yet feared to say, "I believe! I believe!"'

Bray read to him the words, Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. 'Still I felt,' he says 'a violent opposition, and reluctance to believe; yet still the Spirit of God strove with my own, and the evil spirit, till by degrees he chased away the darkness of my unbelief. I found myself

convinced, I know not how nor when; and immediately fell to intercession.' He afterwards adds, 'I now found myself at peace with God, and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ. My temper, for the rest of the day, was mistrust of my own great, but before unknown, weakness. I saw that by faith I stood; and the continual support of faith, which kept me from falling, though of myself I am ever sinking into sin. I went to bed, still sensible of my own weakness (I humbly hope to be more and more so), yet confident of Christ's protection.' This was Charles's 'Day of Pentecost.'

On the following Wednesday, confined to his room, he spent the day in a devout and pious manner. 'At eight o'clock,' says he, 'I prayed by myself for love, with some feeling, and assurance of feeling more. Towards ten my brother was brought in triumph by a troop of our friends, and declared, "I believe!" We sang the hymn with great joy, and parted with prayer. At midnight I gave myself up to Christ, assured I was safe, sleeping or waking!'

The hymn which they sang at this time was in all probability one which he had composed two days before, when he could first cry out, 'I believe I believe!' It appears in the Methodist Hymn Book thus (in the original there were eight verses) : —

Where shall my wondering soul begin  
How shall I all to heaven aspire  
A slave redeemed from death and sin,  
A brand plucked from eternal fire,  
How shall I equal triumphs raise,  
Or sing my great Deliverer's praise  
O how shall I the goodness tell,  
Father, which Thou to me hast showed  
That I, a child of wrath and hell,  
I should be called a child of God,  
Should know, should feel my sins forgiven,  
Blest with this antepast of heaven!  
And shall I slight my Father's love  
Or basely fear His gifts to own  
Unmindful of His favours prove  
Shall I, the hallowed cross to shun,  
Refuse His righteousness to impart,  
By hiding it within my heart  
Outcasts of men, to you I call,  
Harlots, and publicans, and thieves!  
He spreads his arms to embrace you all;  
Sinners alone His grace receives:  
No need of Him the righteous have;  
He came the lost to seek and save.  
Come, O my guilty brethren, come,  
Groaning beneath your load of sin!  
His bleeding heart shall make you room,  
His open side shall take you in;  
He calls you now, invites you home:  
Come, O my guilty brethren, come!

The following are taken from a number of verses evidently addressed to John, entitled:

#### CONGRATULATION TO A FRIEND UPON BELIEVING IN CHRIST.

Bless'd be the Name that sets thee free,  
The Name that sure salvation brings!  
The Sun of Righteousness on thee  
Hath rose with healing in His wings.  
Away let grief and sighing flee;  
Jesus hath died for thee—for thee!  
And will He now forsake His own,  
Or lose the purchase of His blood  
No; for He looks with pity down,  
He watches over thee for good:  
Gracious He eyes thee from above,

And guards and feeds thee with His love.  
Since thou wast precious in His sight,  
How highly favour'd hast thou been I  
Upborne by faith to glory's height,  
The Saviour-God thine eyes have seen;  
Thy heart has felt its sins forgiven,  
And tastes anticipated heaven.  
Still may His love thy fortress be,  
And make thee still His darling care,  
Settle, Confirm, and stablish thee,  
On eagles' wings thy spirit bear;  
Fill thee with heaven, and ever shed  
His choicest blessings on thy head.  
Thus may He comfort thee below;  
Thus may He all His graces give:  
Him but in part thou here canst know:  
Yet here by faith submit to live;  
Help me to fight my passage through,  
Nor seize thy heaven till I may too.  
Or if the sovereign wise decree  
First number thee among the blest,  
(The only good I'd envy thee,)  
Translating to an earlier rest,  
Near, in thy latest hour may I  
Instruct, and learn of thee, to die.

Now, these three men, John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield, are brought together on one plane of religious experience, They have each been subjected to a severe spiritual discipline. They have each, as has been shown, partaken of the blessedness of him that believeth; they have attained to justification by faith, and have proved that they could be justified by no other means. They are one in the bonds of a close affection, bound together as brothers and fellow-labourers, and fellow-helpers in their great and, as they believe, God-appointed work. They have one gospel—the gospels for poor, wretched, sinful men and women; in which gospel they have faith, that greatest faith which is based on their personal experience of its power. They are at one in the acknowledgment of human sin, and of human redemption by Christ Jesus; in the acknowledgment of the supreme work of the Holy Spirit, of the absolute authority of Holy Scripture, and of preaching as the divinely ordained instrument of human conversion. They are one in their submission to an overmastering passion of love for the souls of men, and of readiness to spend and be spent for them. They stand together as the three great leaders in the glorious revival of spiritual religion which took place in the eighteenth century. A divergence did afterwards arise on the grave but subordinate questions of election and predestination. But it led to their adaptation to speak to two classes of people in a divided Protestant Church, so that it might be said, 'He that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles.' This Wesley soon discerned. He wrote to his friend :—

'August 9, 1740.

'I thank you for yours; May 24. The case is quite plain. There are bigots both for predestination and against it. God is sending a message to those on either side. But neither will receive it, unless from one of his own opinion. Therefore, for a time, you axe suffered to be of one opinion, and I of another. But when His time is come, God will do what man cannot—namely, make us both of one mind. Then persecution will flame out, and it will be seen whether we count our lives dear unto ourselves, so that we may finish our course with joy. 'I am, my dearest brother, ever yours,

' JOHN WESLEY.'

Wesley was still in a very unsettled state of mind, alternately exalted and depressed. His sensitiveness to every shifting wind of outward influence was almost a weakness. It is hardly to be wondered at, considering his bodily frailty, the result of his many austerities, and the severe and almost continuous mental strain which he had for some time endured.

June 4 he wrote, ' was indeed a feast-day. For, from the time of my rising till past one in the afternoon, I was praying, reading the Scriptures, singing praise, or calling sinners to repentance. All these days I scarce remember to have opened the Testament, but upon some great and precious promise. And I saw more than ever that the Gospel is in truth but one great promise from the beginning of it to the end.'

On June 6 he says, 'I had still more comfort and peace and joy: on which I fear I began to presume. For in the evening I received a letter

from Oxford, which threw me into much perplexity. It was asserted therein, "That no doubting could consist with the least degree of true faith: that whoever at any time felt any doubt or fear was not weak in faith, but had no faith at all: and that none had any faith till the Spirit of life has made him wholly free from the law of sin and death."

'Begging of God to direct me, I opened my Testament on 1 Cor. iii. 1, etc., where St. Paul speaks of those whom he terms babes in Christ, who were not able to bear strong meat—nay, in a sense, carnal; to whom, nevertheless, he says, Ye are God's building, ye are the temple of God. Surely, then, these men had some degree of faith; though it is plain their faith was but weak.

'After some hours spent in the Scriptures and prayer, I was much comforted. Yet I felt a kind of soreness in my heart, so that I found my wound was not fully healed. O God, save Thou me, and all that are weak in the faith, from doubtful disputations.'

He now determined to fulfil a purpose he had cherished in Georgia, of retiring to Herrnhut for a while. The time seemed propitious—his 'weak mind would not bear to be thus sawn in sunder.' And he hoped the conversing with those who were the living witnesses of the full power of faith, and yet able to bear with the weak, would be a means, by the Divine blessing, of establishing him in faith and spiritual strength. Taking leave of his mother at Salisbury, he passed on to Oxford, where he preached a sermon on 'Salvation by Faith,' speaking with marked clearness and precision on the Faith through which we are saved, and on the Salvation which is through faith; and taking occasion to answer objections to the doctrine, particularly that to preach Salvation or Justification by Faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works. The sermon was soon afterwards printed, and passed into many editions. It stands, where such a sermon should, at the beginning of his own collection of his published works. It was the first publication issued by him after his 'conversion.'

On June 13, in company with his friend Ingham, he set out, remaining three months in Germany, and returning to England on the night of Saturday, September 16.

He made minute observations of the appearance of the country and of the habits and customs of the people, noting with carefulness the religious state of those with whom he conversed, which led him to record, 'And here I continually met with what I sought for, viz., living proofs of the power of faith. Persons saved from inward as well as outward sin, by the love of God shed abroad in their hearts; and from all doubts and fears, by the abiding witness of the Holy Ghost given unto them.'

He visited Count Zinzendorf at Marienborn, and conversed largely with him, and afterwards with the chief officers of the church at Herrnhut, which place he reached on August 1. He gives, at some length, the statements made by half a score officers and members of the church respecting their life's history; also an account of the organization of the Church, and of their religious services and practices, his aim evidently being to make himself thoroughly familiar with whatever distinguished a people to whom he felt himself so deeply indebted.

He was much impressed by what he saw, and declares he would gladly have spent his life at Herrnhut, had not his Master called him to labour in another part of His vineyard. He adds, 'I was exceedingly comforted and strengthened by the conversation of this lovely people; and returned to England more fully determined to spend my life in testifying the gospel of the grace of God.'

He also observes, 'They have a peculiar esteem for lots, and accordingly use them both in public and private, to decide points of importance, when the reasons brought on each side appear to be of equal weight. And they believe this to be then the only way of wholly setting aside their own will, of acquitting themselves of all blame, and clearly knowing what is the will of God.'

During Wesley's absence from England, his brother Charles was exceedingly useful, especially in leading individuals to the Saviour, in visiting prisoners and others, and in preaching.

To his brother Samuel, Wesley wrote, 'God has given me at length the desire of my heart. I am with a Church whose conversation is in heaven, in whom is the mind that was in Christ, and who so walk as He walked. As they have all one Lord and one faith, so they are all partakers of one Spirit, the spirit of meekness and love, which uniformly and continually animates all their conversation.' Finding writing to Charles on the same day (July 7), he says, 'The spirit of the brethren is above our highest expectation. Young and old, they breathe nothing but faith and love, at all times and in all places.' And he rejoices that he has seen with his own eyes more than a hundred witnesses of the: everlasting truth' every one that believeth hath peace, with God, and is freed from sin, and is in Christ a new creature.'

Soon after his return from Germany, Wesley seems to have adopted a rule of conduct which he afterwards urged upon his preachers, in the Twelve Rules of a Helper: 'Tell every one what you think wrong in him, lovingly and plainly, and as soon as may be, else it will fester in your own heart.' So had he previously written to William Law, May 14, 1738, and again May 30; to his brother Samuel, July 7, 1738; to the Moravians, at Marienborn and Herrnhut; and to Samuel again, October 30, 1738.

'To the Rev. William Law.

'May 14, 1738.

Reverend Sir,

'It is in obedience to what I think to be the call of God, that I, who have the sentence of death in my own soul, take upon me to write to you, of whom I have often desired to learn the first elements of the gospel of Christ.

'If you are born of God, you will approve of the design, though it may be but weakly executed. If not, I shall grieve for you, not for myself. For as I seek not the praise of men, so neither regard I the contempt either of you or of any other.

'For two years (more especially) I have been preaching after the model of your two practical treatises; and all that heard have allowed, that the law is great, wonderful, and holy. But no sooner did they attempt to fulfil it, but they found that it is too high for man; and that by doing "the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified."

'To remedy this, I exhorted them, and stirred up myself, to pray earnestly for the grace of God, and to use all the other means of obtaining that grace, which the an-wise God hath appointed. But still, both they and I were more and more convinced, that this is a law by which a man cannot live; the law in our members continually warring against it, and bringing us into deeper captivity to the law of sin.

'Under this heavy yoke I might have groaned till death, had not a holy man, to whom God lately directed me, upon my complaining thereof, answered at once, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart, and nothing shall be impossible to thee. This faith, indeed, as well as the salvation it brings, is the free gift of God. But seek, and thou shalt find. Strip thyself naked of thy own works, and thy own righteousness, and fly to him. For whosoever cometh unto Him He will in no wise cast out."

'Now, sir, suffer me to ask, How will you answer it to our common Lord, that you never gave me this advice Did you never read the Acts of the Apostles, or the answer of Paul to him who said, "What must I do to be saved" Or are you wiser than he Why did I scarce ever hear you name the name of Christ never, so as to ground anything upon "faith in His blood" Who is this who is laying another foundation If you say you advised other things as preparatory to this; what is this, but laying a foundation below the foundation Is not Christ then the first, as well as the last If you say you advised them because you knew that I had faith already, verily you knew nothing of me; you discerned not my spirit at all. I know that I had not faith, unless the faith of a devil, the filth of Judas, that speculative, notional, airy shadow, which lives in the head, not in the heart. But what is this to the living, justifying faith in the blood of Jesus the faith that cleanseth from all sin; that gives usto have free access to the Father; to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" to have "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" which dwelleth in us; and "the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"

'I beseech you, sir, by the mercies of God, to consider deeply and impartially, whether the true reason of your never pressing this upon me was not this—that you had it not yourself whether that man of God was not in the right, who gave this account of a late interview he had with you —" I began speaking to him of faith in Christ: he was silent. Then he began to speak of mystical matters. I spake to him of faith in Christ again: he was silent. Then he began to speak of mystical matters again. I saw his state at once." And a very dangerous one, in his judgments whom I know to have the Spirit of God.

'Once more, sir, let me beg you to consider, whether your extreme roughness, and morose and sour behaviour, at least on many occasions, can possibly be the fruit of a living faith in Christ If not, may the God of peace and love fill up what is yet wanting in you!'

It is impossible to approve of the terms of this letter to one from whom he had received great benefits; nor can a sufficient excuse be found in the fact that it was written a fortnight before he obtained the peace of the gospel, and when his spirit was in a very agitated state; nay, though, as he affirms, 'then sin had dominion over me,' notwithstanding he fought with it continually. He seems for the time to have forgotten what was due to a gentleman, a senior, and a benefactor. Was it called for by the authority with which Law spoke on these questions

Law replied at some length, and with moderation, but not without a keen but kind severity. To this Wesley forwarded a reply on the following day, closing with these words: ' But how are you chargeable with my not having had this faith If you intimate, that you discerned my spirit, then you are chargeable thus: 1. You did not tell me plainly I had it not. 2. You never once advised me to seek or to pray for it. 3. Your advice to me was only proper for such as had faith already; advices which led me further from it, the closer I adhered to them. 4. You recommended books to me, which had no tendency to this faith, but a direct one to destroy good works.

'However, "Let the fault be divided," you say, "between me and Kempis." No; if I understood Kempis wrong, it was your part, who discerned my spirit, and saw my mistake, to have explained him, and to have set me right.

'I ask pardon, sir, if I have said anything inconsistent with the obligations I owe you, and the respect I bear to your character.'

It is not needful to follow the correspondence further. Law ends it with the words: 'If it was my business to put this question to you, and if you have a right to charge me with guilt for the neglect of it, may you not much more reasonably accuse them who have authoritatively

charge over you Did the Church in which you are educated put this question to you Did the bishop who ordained you either deacon or priest do this for you Did the bishop who sent you a missionary to Georgia require this of you Pray, sir, be at peace with me.'

But, as Canon Overton very aptly remarks, 'it is neither a pleasing nor a profitable task to descant upon the disputes between two good Christians. It is far pleasanter to record that Wesley's after conduct was thoroughly characteristic of the noble and generous nature of the man. Though the divergence between him and his late mentor increased rather than diminished with years, yet he constantly referred to Law in his sermons, and always in terms of the warmest admiration and respect.'

To his brother Samuel he wrote, from Marienborn, in one of the letters referred to : —

'I was much concerned when my brother Charles once incidentally mentioned a passage that occurred at Tiverton: "Upon my offering to read," said he, "a chapter in the Serious Call, my sister said, 'Who do you read that to Not to these young ladies, I presume; and your brother and I do not want it.'" Yes, my sister, I must tell you, in the spirit of love, and before God, who searcheth the heart, you do want it; you want it exceedingly. I know no one soul that wants to read, and consider deeply, so much the chapter of Universal Love, and that of Intercession. The character of Susurrus, there, is your own. I should be false to God and you, did I not tell you so. O may it be so no longer; but may you love your neighbour as yourself, both in word and tongue, and in deed and truth!'

And again, from London, October 30, 1738:

'That you will always receive kindly what is so intended, I doubt not. Therefore I again recommend the character of Susurrus both to you and my sister, as (Whether real or feigned) striking at the root of a fault, of which both she and you were, I think, more guilty than any other two persons I have known in my life. O may God deliver both you and me from all bitterness and evil-speaking, as well as from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism! . . .

'O brother, would to God you would leave disputing coxacerning the things which you know not (if indeed you know them not), and beg of God to fill up what is yet wanting in you I Why should not you also seek till you receive "that peace of God which passeth all understanding" Who shall hinder you, notwithstanding the manifold temptations, from rejoicing , "with joy unspeakable, by reason of glory" Amen! Lord Jesus! May you, and all who are near of kin to you (if you have it not already), feel his love shed abroad in your heart, by His Spirit which dwelleth in you; and be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of your inheritance. I am

'Yours and my sister's most affectionate brother.'

These were severe words to apply to his elder brother, an honoured clergyman of the Church of England. That Wesley judged it to be his duty to write thus must be admitted; and with him duty was absolute law. It does not appear that he wrote in mere censoriousness. He wrote in the delicate, sensitive fidelity of his spirit. He was disposed to write in the same strain to the Church at Herrnhut, as we learn from the following fragment of a letter that was not sent.

He says: 'It may be observed that I had before seen a few things in the Moravians which I could not approve of. In this journey I saw a few more, in the midst of many excellent things; in consequence whereof, in September, 1738, soon after my return to England, I began the following letter to the Moravian Church. But being fearful of trusting my own judgment, I determined to wait yet a little longer, and so laid it by unfinished:

'MY DEAR BRETHREN,

'I cannot but rejoice in your steadfast faith, in your love to our blessed Redeemer, your deadness to the world, your meekness, temperance, chastity, and love of one another. I greatly approve of your Conferences and Bands, of your methods of instructing children; and, in general, of your great care of the souls committed to your charge.

'But of some other things I stand in doubt, which I will mention in love and meekness. And I wish that, in order to remove those doubts, you would, on each of these heads, first, plainly answer whether the fact be as I suppose; and if so, secondly, consider whether it be right.

'Is not the Count all in all among you

'Do you not magnify your own Church too much

'Do you not use guile and dissimulation in many cases

'Are you not of a close, dark, reserved temper and behaviour'

The severity, of tone adopted in these letters arrests attention. Is it to be ascribed to the fervour of his zeal, carrying him beyond the bounds of prudence Or did he so write in the hope he might thereby most effectually arouse attention to an unwelcome subject

But he is more deeply perplexing in the matter of his personal religious experience. He had declared that he was not a Christian until the Aldersgate-Street incident. His brother Samuel, writing to Mrs. Hutton, says, 'What Jack means by his not being a Christian till last month, I understand not. Had he never been in covenant with God Then, as Mr. Hutton observed, baptism was nothing. Had he totally apostatized from it I dare say not: and yet he must either be unbaptized, or an apostate to make his words true. Perhaps it might come into his crown that he was in a state of mortal sin, unrepented of, and had long lived in such a course. This I do not believe; however, he must answer for himself.... Besides, a sinful course is not an abolition of the covenant; for that very reason, because it is a breach of it. If it were not, it would not be broken.'

But if Wesley is below his own ideal, he is far above his brother Samuel's. The conception of a Christian such as he desires to be—such as he is—is far ahead of that which the latter described as 'being in the covenant of baptism.' Are not these brothers representatives of two widely diverse ideals of the Christian life Do they not stand on different sides of a line, which to-day divides the Christian Church

John replied to Samuel in the following terms:

'With regard to my own character, and my doctrine likewise, I shall answer you very plainly. By a Christian, I mean one who so believes in Christ, as that sin hath no more dominion over him: and, in this obvious sense of the word, I was not a Christian till May the 24th last past. For till then sin had the dominion over me, although I fought with it continually; but surely then from that time to this it hath not ;—such is the free grace of God in Christ. What sins they were which till then reigned over me, and from which, by the grace of God, I am now free, I am ready to declare on the house-top, if it may be for the glory of God.

'If you ask by what means I am made free (though not perfect, neither infallibly sure of my perseverance), I answer, By faith in Christ; by such a sort or degree of faith as I had not till that day. My desire of this faith I knew long before, though not so clearly till Sunday, January the 8th last.

'Some measure of this faith, which bringeth salvation, or victory over sin, and which implies peace, and trust in God through Christ, I now enjoy by his free mercy; though in very deed it is in me but as a grain of mustard-seed: for the plerophory of faith—the seal of the Spirit, the love of God shed abroad in my heart, and producing joy in the Holy Ghost, "joy which no man taketh away, joy unspeakable and full of glory ;" this witness of the Spirit I have not, but I patiently wait for it. I know many who have already received it; more than one or two in the very hour we were praying for it. And having seen and spoken with a cloud of witnesses abroad, as well as in my own country, I cannot doubt but that believers who wait and pray for it will find these scriptures fulfilled in themselves. My hope is, that they will be fulfilled in me: I build on Christ, the Rock of Ages; on His sure mercies described in His word, and on His promises, all of which I know are yea, and amen. Those who have not yet received joy in the Holy Ghost, the love of God, and the plerophory of faith (any or all of be a perfect Christian Surely a true Christian may say, 'Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect'

But this is not the limit of the difficulty. On January 4 of the following year (1739) he wrote, obviously referring to himself, 'One who had had the form of godliness many years, wrote the following reflections:

'My friends affirm I am mad, because I said I was not a Christian a year ago. I affirm, I am not a Christian now. Indeed, what I might have been I know not, had I been faithful to the grace then given, when, expecting nothing less, received such a sense of the forgiveness of my sins as till then I never knew. But that I am not a Christian at this day, I as assuredly know, as that Jesus is the Christ.

'For a Christian is one who has the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, which (to mention no more) are love, peace, joy. But these I have not. I have not any love of God. I do not love either the Father or the Son. Do you ask, how do I know whether I love God, I answer by another question, "How do you know whether you love me" Why, as you know whether you are hot or cold. You feel this moment that you do or do not love me. And I feel this moment I do not love God; which therefore I know, because I feel it. And I know it also by St. John's plain rule, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." For I love the world. I desire the things of the world, some or other of them; and have done all my life. I have always placed some part of my happiness in some or other of the things that are seen, particularly in meat and drink [!], and in the company of those I loved. For many years, I have been, yea, and still am, hankering after a happiness, in loving and being loved by one or another. And in these I have, from time to time, taken more pleasure than in God.

'Again, joy in the Holy Ghost I have not. I have now and then some starts of joy in God; but it is not that joy. For it is not abiding. Neither is it greater than I have had on some worldly occasions. So that I can in nowise be said to "rejoice evermore;" much less to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

'Yet again: I have not" the peace of God;" that peace, peculiarly so called. The peace I have may be accounted for on natural principles. I have health, strength, friends, a competent fortune and a composed, cheerful temper. Who would not have a sort of peace in such

circumstances But I have none which can, with any propriety, be called "a peace which passeth all understanding."

'From hence I conclude, though I have given, and do give, all my goods to feed the poor, I am not a Christian. Though I have endured hardship, though I have in all things denied myself and taken up my cross, I am not a Christian. My works are nothing; my sufferings are nothing; I have not the fruits of the Spirit of Christ. Though I have constantly used all the means of grace for twenty years, I am not a Christian.'

Tyerman is content to say 'this is extremely puzzling,' and to leave his reader to 'form his own opinion,' as do Southey and the earlier biographers, unless they omit altogether any reference to the subject. But all this must be read in the light of the letter just now quoted, addressed to his brother Samuel, in which he affirms that he was not a Christian until May 24, because sin had dominion over him; but that by 'such a soft or degree of faith' as he had on that day, sin's dominion was broken, and he then became a Christian—a Christian, it is true, in 'an imperfect sense.' But in this letter of January, 1739, he had in view another condition, the attainment of which he judges to be necessary in order to be a Christian. It is 'the plerophory of faith,' a condition which describes the utmost Christian maturity. This he had not attained. Yet he could not doubt that he had a measure of faith.' In saying that he has 'not any love of God,' is he not led astray by looking for strong emotional feelings, which are so variable under differing conditions? An authoritative voice declares that 'whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected.'

Wesley must not be blamed for subjecting himself to the severest test possible. But it would be a grievous error to teach that one is not a Christian until he is 'full grown.'

To another he writes: 'After a long sleep, there seems now to be a great awakening in this place also. The Spirit of the Lord hath already shaken the dry bones, and some of them stand up and live. But I am still dead and cold; having peace indeed, but no love or joy in the Holy Ghost.'

To another: 'Verily the Spirit of the Lord hath lift up his standard against the iniquity which had overspread our land. O pray ye for us, that He would send more labourers into His harvest! And that He would enable us, whom He hath already sent, to approve ourselves faithful ministers of the New Covenant by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report. In particular, let all the brethren and sisters who are with you, pray that God would warm, with His love, the cold heart of, dear sir, your much obliged and very affectionate brother in Christ.'

Once more: 'Do not think, my dear brother, that I have forgotten you. I cannot forget you, because I love you: though I cannot love any one as yet, as I ought, because I cannot love our blessed Lord as I ought. My heart is cold and senseless. It is indeed a heart of stone. Pray for me, and let all your household pray for me, yea, and all the brethren also, that our God would give me a broken heart, a loving heart; a heart wherein His Spirit may delight to dwell.... Above all, I want you to pray a great deal for your poor, weak brother.'

Truly he walked in a vale of humility!

How much more guardedly, clearly, and justly Wesley afterwards wrote and spoke on these subjects his printed sermons abundantly show. Dr. Rigg, a careful student of Wesley and his work, says, 'The fluctuations in Wesley's own views and experience, during the early months after his conversion, show that his views respecting the nature of the Spirit's witness, and the character and extent of regeneration, were, as was to be expected, not fully defined or finally settled until some time after.' And he adds, 'By making the most of Wesley's antecedent preparation of heart, and by laying too much stress on those fluctuations of spirit and of view, and those self-depreciatory statements respecting his own experience soon after his conversion, the like of which are so commonly found in the experience of humble and conscientious young converts, who, as yet, are necessarily wanting in experience of spiritual difficulties, perplexities, and temptations, and whose natural but unwarranted expectations of settled joy and tranquillity have been painfully disappointed, it is possible to diminish the proportions and to obscure the relations of the great cardinal change in Wesley's spiritual character.'

Wesley has been much assailed by his critics for his credulity in matters relating to witchcraft, apparitions, the action of good and evil spirits, and other related subjects. Isaac Taylor says, 'Wesley's most prominent infirmity was his wonder-loving credulity; from the beginning to the end of his course this weakness ruled him. Few were the instances in which he exercised a due discrimination in listening to tales involving what was miraculous, or out of the order of nature. It is, in fact, mortifying to contemplate an instance like this, of a powerful mind bending like a straw in the wind before every whiff of the supernatural.' The accusation is not denied. Wesley himself is explicit on the subject. He wrote, 'With my latest breath will I bear my testimony against giving up to infidels one great proof of the invisible world; I mean, that of witchcraft and apparitions, confirmed by the testimony of ages.'

But there is a bearing of this subject upon Wesley's mental characteristics that has escaped observation. Credulity and incredulity are streams that not unfrequently run side by side, a readiness to believe being often accompanied by a difficulty in believing. The man of feeble faith in things unseen—of which things alone faith takes cognizance—often clings to any outward or visible fact, to sustain him in his wavering. To how great an extent is this the case to-day, both within the Church and beyond its boundaries! How many persons

cannot quietly rely upon the true foundations of faith! Thus far they are incredulous. They are not unwilling, but unable, to believe. They therefore desire confirmation from what is visible or tangible; hence springs credulity. Now, notwithstanding Wesley's strong faith, he was troubled not a little with the questionings of unbelief. These two apparently conflicting, if not contradictory states of mind in him are obvious. For, while we find him contending for belief in the unseen and spiritual, and habitually living under the influence of that belief himself; yet evidences are not wanting that he had great difficulty in maintaining it. In a somewhat remarkable sermon on The Case of Reason considered, while showing the inability of reason to produce faith, he says:-' Many years ago I found the truth of this by sad experience. After carefully heaping up the strongest arguments which I could find, either in ancient or modern authors, for the very being of a God, and (which is nearly connected with it) the existence of an invisible world, I have wandered up and down, musing with myself, "What if all these things which I see around me, this earth and heaven, this universal frame, has existed from eternity What if 'the generation of men be exactly parallel with the generation of leaves' if the earth drops its successive inhabitants, just as the tree drops its leaves What if that saying of a great man be really true, ' Death is nothing, and nothing is after death' How am I sure that this is not the case; that I have not followed cunningly devised fables" And I have pursued the thought, till there was no spirit in me, and I was ready to choose strangling rather than life.'

These words, while giving further insight into Wesley's mental habits, show also with what labour he strove to create, or to sustain, a living apprehension of things unseen. He was by nature a reasoner, and the faculty had been fostered by training. But he could not demonstrate the being of a God, or a spiritual world, or an immortality. Of things seen or demonstrable, faith is not the evidence. Therefore his readiness to look for such visible or tangible proofs as he judged were to be found in supernatural events. In the light of this confession, we are better able to understand the words in a remarkable letter of July 27, 1766, to his brother Charles, 'I have no direct evidence (I do not say, that I am a child of God, but) of anything invisible or eternal.'

It is observable that from this time (1738) all reference to his religious state disappears from his Journal. But Canon Overton is not quite accurate in saying that, 'henceforth during the whole of his long life hardly the shadow of a doubt crossed his path; clouds and darkness constantly swept over his outer life, but there was perpetual and unclouded sunshine within.'

Wesley addressed the following interesting letter to the Moravian Church:

'To the Church of God which is in Herrnhut, John Wesley, an unworthy Presbyterian of the Church of God in England, wisheth all grace and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

October 14, 1738

'Glory be to God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for His unspeakable gift! for giving me to be an eye-witness of your faith, and love, and holy conversation in Christ Jesus! I have borne testimony thereof with all plainness of speech, in many parts of Germany, and thanks have been given to God by many on your behalf.

'We are endeavouring here also, by the grace which is given us, to be followers of you, as ye are of Christ. Fourteen were added to us, since our return, so that we have now eight bands of men, consisting of fifty-six persons; all of whom seek for salvation only in the blood of Christ. As yet we have only two small bands of women; the one of three, the other of five persons. But here are many others who only wait till we have leisure to instruct them, how they may most effectually build up one another in the faith and love of Him who gave Himself for them.

'Though my brother and I are not permitted to preach in most of the churches in London, yet (thanks be to God), there are others left, wherein we have liberty to speak the truth as it is in Jesus. Likewise every evening, and on set evenings in the week at two several places, we publish the word of reconciliation, sometimes to twenty or thirty, sometimes to fifty or sixty, sometimes to three or four hundred persons met together to hear it. We begin and end all our meetings with singing and prayer; and we know that our Lord heareth our prayer, having more than once or twice (and this was not done in a corner) received our petitions in that very hour.

'Nor hath He left Himself without other witnesses of His grace and truth. Ten ministers I know now in England, who lay the right foundation, "The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin." Over and above whom [ have found one Anabaptist, and one, if not two, of the teachers among the Presbyterians here, who, I hope, love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and teach the way of God in truth. 'O cease not, ye that are highly favoured, to beseech our Lord that He would be with us even to the end; to remove that which is displeasing in His sight, to support that which is weak among us, to give us the whole mind that was in Him, and teach us to walk even as He walked I And may the very God of peace fill up what is wanting in your faith, and build you up more and more in all lowliness of mind, in all plainness of speech, in all zeal and watchfulness; that He may present you to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that ye may be holy and unblamable in the day of his appearing.'

He now wrote cheery words to various friends concerning the work that was being done, but depreciatory ones concerning himself. To Mr. Ingham at Herrnhut: 'O my dear brother, God hath been wonderfully gracious to me ever since our return to England. There are many adversaries, but a great and effectual door is opened; and we continue through evil report and good report to preach the gospel of

Christ to all people, and earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. Indeed, He hath given unto us many of our fiercest opposers, who now receive with meekness the ingrafted word.... Mr. Stonehouse hath at length determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; and to preach unto all, remission of sins through faith in His blood. Mr. Sparkes also is a teacher of sound doctrine. Mr. Hutchins is strong in the faith and mightily convinces gainsayers, so that no man hitherto has been able to stand before him. Mr. Kinchin, Gainbold, and Wells have not yet received comfort, but are patiently waiting for it, Mr. Robson, who is now a minister of Christ also, is full of faith and peace and love. So is Mr. Combes, a little child who was called to minister in holy things two or three weeks ago. Indeed, I trust the Lord will let us see, and that shortly, a multitude of priests that believe.'

To Count Zinzendorf he writes, 'The Word of the Lord again runs and is glorified; and His work goes on and prospers. Great multitudes are everywhere awakened, and cry out, "What must we do to be saved" Many of them see that there is only one name under heaven whereby they can be saved; and more and more of those who seek it, find salvation in His name, and are of one heart and one soul.'

'Wesley's homeward voyage in 1735,' says one of the ablest of the critics of Wesley's life and work, 'marks the conclusion of his High Church period. He abated nothing, of his attachment to the ordinances of the Church, either then or to the last days of his life, and he did not so soon reach that degree of independence of her hierarchy and some of her rules which marks his furthest point of divergence; but his Journals during this voyage chronicle for us that deep dissatisfaction which is felt whenever an earnest nature wakes up to the incompleteness of a traditional religion; and his after life, compared with his two years in Georgia, makes it evident that he passed into a new spiritual region His [earlier] Journals are marked by a depression which we never meet with again.' 'In 1739 Whitefield, writing to the societies whom Woodward had anxiously vindicated from the charge of any tendency to separate from the Church, urged them neither to be confined by her Liturgy nor submissive to her rulers. This was not Wesley's language; it was language he would have condemned. But adherence to the Church was no longer the first condition of membership in any society with which he was in sympathy. The birthday of a Christian was already shifted from his baptism to his conversion, and in that change the partition line of two great systems is crossed.' These last are weighty words, and show the clear discernment of the writer.

Wesley, as we have seen, returned to London from Germany in the evening of Saturday, September 16, and on the following day he says, 'I began to declare in my own country the glad tidings of salvation, preaching three times, and afterwards expounding the Holy Scripture to a large company in the Minories.' 'On Monday,' he says, 'I rejoiced to meet with our little society, which now consisted of thirty-two persons' (the society which was formed on May 1, and which met in Fetter Lane). 'The next day I went to the condemned felons in Newgate, and offered them free salvation. In the evening I went to a society in Bear Yard, and preached repentance and remission of sins. The next evening I spoke the truth in love at a society in Aldersgate Street. Some contradicted at first; but not long: so that nothing but love appeared at our parting. Thursday, 21, I went to a society in Gutter Lane; but I could not declare the mighty works of God there, as I did afterwards at the Savoy in all simplicity. And the Word did not return empty. Finding abundance of people greatly exasperated by gross misrepresentations of the words I had spoken, I went to as many of them in private as my time would permit. God gave me much love towards them all. Some were convinced they were mistaken. And who knoweth but God will soon return to the rest, and leave a blessing behind him On Saturday I was enabled to speak strong words both at Newgate and at Mr. E.'s society; and the next day at St. Anne's, and twice at St. John's, Clerkenwell; so that I fear they will bear me there no longer.' He had many similar experiences, as when on Sunday, October 8, he preached at the Savoy Chapel, on the parable, 'or history rather, of the pharisee and publican, I suppose for the last time.'

In this way he continued to labour, preaching 'the new way' with much fervour and frequency, in such of the churches as were open to him, in visiting, and in expounding in the various societies where he was welcomed. In November he paid a visit to Oxford, where he began more narrowly to inquire what is the doctrine of the Church of England concerning the much controverted point of Justification by Faith. The sum of what he found he published early in the following year, for the use of others. This he followed a little later by a second volume on the same subject. He revived the reading of prayers at Bocardo—the chamber over the north gate, used as a prison; also in two of the city workhouses, where he preached twice in the week; and on both days at the Castle; and expounded at Mr. Fox's Society. Hearing that Mr. Whitefield had arrived from Georgia, he hastened to London to meet him, where 'God gave us once more to take sweet counsel together.' He preached at St. Antholin's, at Islington, and at St. Swithin's, 'for the last time.' On Sunday, November 5, he preached at St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate; in the afternoon at Islington, and in the evening, he says, 'to such a congregation as I never saw before, at St. Clement's in the Strand. As this was the first time of my preaching here, I suppose it is to be the last.' Such crowds congregated wherever he preached that the ordinary attendants at the churches complained. This was one cause of the closing of the doors against him. Another lay in the strangeness of the message which he brought.

On December 24 he preached at Great St. Bartholomew's in the morning, and at Islington in the afternoon, where, he says, 'we had the blessed Sacrament every day this week, and were comforted on every side.' On the following Sunday, December 31, he preached to many thousands in St. George's, Spitalfields, and to a yet more crowded congregation at Whitechapel in the afternoon. Thus ended this eventful year.