

Wesley was peculiarly pleasing in conversation. Dr. Johnson, who is considered the greatest talker of the eighteenth century, pronounced him enchanting in this respect. Like Luther, and unlike Calvin, he was fond of poetry and of music. He showed ill-judgment in the selection of a wife, but so did Socrates, Job, John Milton, and other great men, the list of whose names would equal Homer's catalogue of the ships.

Wesley may be compared with Loyola as a great reformer and organizer. Loyola, like Wesley, instituted one of the most memorable religious movements recorded in history. The one sought to create a new spiritual life within the Roman Church; the other sought the same end within the Anglican Church. Both created religious societies which have had a wonderful influence upon the thought and conduct of mankind. Both secured the absolute veneration of their followers. But while the society which Loyola founded became the most potent religious organization of the world, the principles upon which it was established were hostile to liberty and the progress of human kind. Even the Pope himself was compelled to suppress it as being fatal to the existence of any government. Wesley placed no fetters on the human mind, and the society which he founded has ever shown itself the friend of human progress and of all that tends to promote the welfare of the race.

Wesley may be compared with Voltaire, who was his contemporary. From the character of the one there sounded forth the music of a divine harmony. From that of the other there came a clang as of a breaking chord. The genius and character of the one brought sweetness and purity into English life. The individual genius of the other brought into the life of France bitterness and vice. When Wesley was born Englishmen had almost ceased to care whether they had a religion, for those were the times which the poet described when he wrote the lines:

"I dreamed a dream last Christmas eve,  
Of a people whose God was make-believe;  
A dream of an old faith shrunk to a guess,  
And a Christian Church and nation and press,  
Who believed they believed it—more or less."

But Wesley made religion prominent in the life and thought of the people of England. It ceased to be a guess, and became a living reality. He established their faith on the Rock of Ages. Wesley enthroned the Christian religion in England. Voltaire dethroned it for the time being in France. The people of France abolished it by law; they ordered the Bible burned by the public hangman, and voted death an eternal sleep. France, under the influence of Voltaire's teachings, drifted upon the sea of revolution. England, under the direction of Wesley, found itself in the midst of a revolution.

What a difference was there in these two revolutions. The one was peaceable and glorious, a religious revolution. The other was turbulent, bloody, and disastrous, a civil revolution. As France floated on the sea of revolution, and as the ocean swelled, and the air darkened, and the sky blackened with the tempest, and the thunders rolled, the people realized that in throwing away the Bible they had thrown overboard their chart and compass. Voltaire could transform Paris, the seat of art and of elegance, into a slaughter-house, but he could not overthrow the Christian religion; and to-night, as when Voltaire was a boy there, the chapel bell in the Rue St. Jacques summons the people to worship. On the other hand, Wesley wrought such a peaceful revolution as in real importance to England is regarded as far transcending those splendid victories by land and sea won by the elder Pitt, which constitute "the dazzling episodes of the reign of George II." Voltaire destroyed the moral consciousness of France, while Wesley recreated the moral consciousness of England.

This great man, as he came to the end of his career, might have said with the great apostle: "Are they ministers of Christ? I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. . . . Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned. . . . In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in fastings often. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

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