

the Church he would feel the value of its meaning; but it would not be so with his successors, who being more laymen would see nothing more to hinder their administration of Sacraments, than their praying and preaching in the pulpit. And thus it turned out: From disunion with the Church secretly and at intervals, the Methodists soon proceeded to a more open and systematic separation in the two vital points of discipline, namely, the ordination of their ministers, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. From an *addition* to the Church hours of Prayer, and the Church Services (for at first they held no assemblies save out of Church hours), they proceeded to recognize meetings parallel with and rivalling the hours and Services of the Church—until at last their whole system stood forth, as one built on the same grounds as any other system of dissent. Then from their separation from the Church arose of course its certain consequences, separation among themselves, until at the present moment there are at least seven different sorts of Methodists, each claiming an equal right to be called successors of John Wesley, while at the same time from Whitfield his former companion and friend, there have arisen two different communities in addition—making altogether among the Methodists no less than nine varieties of schism. The differences between Wesley and Whitfield turn on the cardinal points of the doctrines of Election and Free Grace. They had separated irreconcilably long before the death of Wesley, and their followers were called respectively, as distinguishing their tenets from each other, Arminian and Calvinistic. We shall return to the followers of Whitfield or the Calvinistic Methodists when we have considered in the first place the followers of Wesley, and have pursued their history into the various schisms and divisions into which in the progress of time they were driven.

The last Conference at which Wesley presided was in the year 1790; he died in the year 1791. At that time there were no fewer than 108 circuits and 295 preachers, while the members of his societies throughout the United Kingdom amounted to about 72,000. This was a large body to be wielded and governed by a scheme of mere human device. The Conference assembled the year after Wesley's death, and proceeded to their work as usual. Wesley had left the government of his society in the hands of one hundred of his principal ministers. These hundred ministers legally constituted '*The Conference*' 'being preachers or expounders of God's Word in connection with John Wesley,' and were invested with the whole power of governing the society. They were to elect their successors themselves, when vacancies occurred by death or otherwise; and made by a deed of law of plenary authority to direct and manage all the affairs of the society, appoint the circuits,

manage the funds, and ultimately to ordain and appoint the ministers. From hence it appears that the Conference, which thus consisted solely of preachers, virtually possessed the whole power of the society, while the laity, so to call them, the ordinary people of every class were deprived of all voice in the regulation of their affairs. The government was that of a Monarchy while Wesley lived, for he himself guided and ruled the Conference, but thus became an oligarchy after his death. But it was not according to the genius of the English people to submit contentedly to a form of government in which the majority had no voice. It seemed an assumption even more than in the Church herself, that the preachers or clergy should be superior to the people, and was an imitation of the priestly power out of which they had been delivered when they separated from the bosom of the Church. For what purpose had they escaped from one set of clergy, if they were only to be submitted to another. This was the universal cry, and it was the key-note to all the schisms which ultimately took place among them, as will presently be seen. It arose from that inherent tendency to democratic government as opposed to the oligarchic which ever prevails in this country, and which runs through every institution and society from the House of Commons down to the lowest debating club, or Mechanics' Institute.

The Conference which first met after Wesley's death was, as before said, in 1792, and was held at Manchester. The preachers or members of this Conference published a declaration that they would '*adhere to the plan left to them by John Wesley*.' But this determination was immediately opposed, and the majority of the society openly demanded that greater '*Religious Liberty*'—(the usual watch-cry of schism), should be afforded to the '*people*.' Several preachers came forward and by their speeches and writings paved the way for a kind of compromise which was at that time called '*The Pacification*.' By this it was resolved that in every place where there was a three-fold majority of class-leaders, stewards, and trustees—there the plan which John Wesley had left them should not in its strictness be adhered to, but that on the contrary, they should hold their assemblies in Church hours, and administer (so to call it) the Lord's Supper in their meeting-houses, and also baptize their children—acts of Religion, which Wesley had expressly forbidden. Here was the first triumph of the popular voice, and at the same time the first step of positive Schism; and what was thus decided as to religious matters, was soon followed by a similar advance in temporal matters, and general legislation. It was said that the custom of the primitive Church was that the laity should join with the Presbytery in all matters connected with the common body in the administration of