THE IRISH CHURCH IN THE LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY[1]

I

THE study of the civil and ecclesiastical history of Ireland has frequently suffered from the failure of historians to see Ireland in relation to Europe. An island on the fringe of Western Europe is necessarily affected by remoteness from the great currents of cultural and political life, and this condition is heightened when international influences are mediated through the interests of a powerful neighbour, whose policy had been for centuries, either to exploit and experiment with its small and dejected neighbour, or to treat it, in the familiar phrase, as " West Britain ", an extension of Anglo-Saxonism possessed of local peculiarities which time would steadily eradicate, or policy assimilate. This situation is apparent when we see in mediaeval Ireland after the Norman invasions the attempted establishment of feudal rule, the introduction of Norman-English institutions when opportunity offered, and the establishment of foreign monastic houses from which Irishmen were excluded. Later we find Tudor ecclesiastical laws adopted in Ireland, and in the seventeenth century Cromwell introduced the religious and political system of the Commonwealth. Later still, after the collapse of the Irish Jacobite cause, this policy advanced rapidly. The purpose of the Imperial parliament was to destroy all vestige of independent thought and action, so that the Anglo-Irish Church and Parliament should be completely subordinate to England. Irish affairs became " the King's business in Ireland," and in the eighteenth century's earlier decades the fostering of " the English interest " was the chief occupation of the civil and religious leaders. Thus we can understand the natural tendency to study the history of this island from a narrow and self-contained point-of-view. The virtues were English, the vices inevitably Irish. The alternative offered by the national

[1] From papers read to the clergy of the diocese of Cashel and at St. Brigid's Cathedral, Kildare.

historians has been generally to assign the vices to English influence, and to exalt as conspicuously Irish anything that might dimly be discerned as virtue.

In considering the Church situation in the eighteenth century it is well to remember that failures and shortcomings were faults common to the century rather than to Ireland, and that the tyrannies of Ireland were but the echoes and reproductions of the tyrannies of other lands. For example, the penal code against Roman Catholics, a series of coercive enactments belonging to the first half of the eighteenth century, was modelled to a large extent on the laws against Huguenots in France. But unlike the French laws the Irish Code was but half-heartedly enforced, and its infringement constantly connived at. Its two most oppressive sections, dealing with land tenure and education did deprive the Roman Catholic majority for years of an educated and socially eligible leadership. Also, occasional outbursts of unbalanced zeal caused suffering in religious matters, but in general a spirit of resignation possessed the Roman Catholic majority, and local unrest was almost always of an agrarian character. The rapacity of landlords and their agents, and the exactions of tithe proctors fell upon all tenants irrespective of creed, though naturally those who did not belong to the Established Church felt the greatest grievance.

Many instances could be given of the public indifference to the repressive laws. Roman Catholic priests held parochial office for long years, and suffered little or no interference. Their bishops lived obscurely, and few came under the weight of the law. Roman Catholic churches and convents existed in the capital and in other towns, but as long as they were simple and unpretending and self-effacing they were usually unmolested. In the country districts there was no great disturbance. Some instances of "priest-hunting" are mentioned by Lecky, but these it seems, were exceptional. When the Earl of Chesterfield was Viceroy towards the middle of the century, he is reported to have said that the only dangerous Roman Catholic he met was a Miss Ambrose whose personal attractiveness had influence over the young gentlemen of his Court.

In considering the situation of the Established Church, Anglican in order and liturgy, it is well to keep in mind the prevailing religious atmosphere of the times. It was typical of its period, a season of dogmatic indifference. The Age of

Reason could not be an age of spiritual fervour. If enthusiasm showed itself it had to contend with a mental attitude of frigid officialism for which no one can be blamed. France after the overthrow of the Jansenists showed complete religious decay; Germany had lost religious conviction unless that form of it which operated as Pietism; England, on the testimony of Bishop Butler, was in rapid decline from the Christian faith; Italy, if we may judge from the circumstances which actuated Alphonsus Liguori, was greatly neglected in spiritual matters. Jeancard in his Life of Liguori says that Liguori found the country people living in almost complete abandonment. The ordinary ministry of souls was carried on in a dull and drowsy fashion, and Liguori established the Redemptorists to revive spiritual energy and faith. In Scotland the rule of Moderatism appears by the usual accounts to have deadened the life of the Church there. It may be truthfully said that all Europe shared in the attenuated lukewarm beliefs of the age of the Deists. Christian truth depended on Christian evidences, not on Christian experience: not upon its inherent power but upon deduction from certain premises. Paley and his books are typical of the century's view of the gospel.

II

When the evangelical revival came in these islands its opponents were not apostates or hypocrites, but men whose minds were set in the characteristic thought of their age. Bishops had become statesmen in the Church rather than churchmen in the State. Recognising this condition of affairs we can view the epoch without asperity or excessive censure. So we come to the Church of Ireland, and glance at its manner of life in the half-century before the union of Ireland and Great Britain in 1800.

In 1750 Archbishop Stone was Primate and at the head of the business of state. No one has so far attempted to portray him adequately. The historian Caesar Litton Falkiner, whose untimely death is lamented after more than thirty years, wrote an essay on Stone which will disappoint the reader who wants to know what Stone was like. He was magnificent in outward show, devoted to the English interest, and hated by his political rivals. J. A. Froude attempted a portrayal of him

in *Two Chiefs of Dunboy*, which may be read with profit, though it leaves the essential Stone mysterious still. Intellectual capacity he had, and he was one of the few to realise the merit of Hume's *History of England*, but of spiritual concern no trace has so far been revealed. He is our supreme instance of political episcopacy. The rest of the bench at the time claim little attention, though most writers single out for special discussion Frederick Hervey, Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry. He is called our most eccentric bishop, and book after book repeats the old stories of his extravagances, his absenteeism, his leadership of the armed Volunteers whose activities largely created what is called Grattan's Parliament. He is said to have aimed at a military dictatorship, but the Volunteers were not without wisdom, and jettisoned the ecclesiastical prince in favour of a more circumspect leader. Bishop Hervey was a great builder both of palaces and churches, and an apostle of tolerance who extended his beneficence to both Roman Catholic priest and Presbyterian minister. On his tombstone at Ickworth in Suffolk is an inscription which reads: "Hostile sects which had long entertained feelings of deep animosity towards each other were gradually softened and reconciled by his influence and example." Is not this a tribute which goes far to vindicate the Bishop's claim to possess a genial wisdom more austere and bigoted men lacked? May we not suppose that the quiet of his diocese, when at the end of the century other northern and adjoining counties were harassed by outrage, sectarian strife, and rebellion, may be due to this man who is usually held up to contempt? It may be remembered too that John Wesley liked and respected him. His predecessor in Derry, Bishop Barnard, was another who had Wesley's approval. To him he was the good old Bishop with whom he could spend two or three hours in useful conversation.

It is perhaps not unjust to say that for the eighteenth century prelate, religion was not an urgent matter. Bishop Pococke of Ossory, a sound Oriental scholar and traveller, made a tour of the country in 1752, and we might expect to find a good deal of information about Church life in the diary he kept. Yet he mentions only that he occasionally preached, and once only speaks of the Church situation. Referring to Belfast he says: "The church is a very mean fabric for such a place; the congregation but small, and most of them of lower rank. But

sixty families out of four hundred go to church." It is to be remembered, of course, that the city of Belfast was at the time mainly a centre of Presbyterian life. Only in the twentieth century has Presbyterianism ceased to have a majority of the Protestant inhabitants. By contrast with these bishops may be mentioned Thomas Lewis O'Beirne, an ex-Roman Catholic who became Bishop of Ossory and later of Meath. He was devout and conscientious throughout his episcopate. Again, this time by contrast with O'Beirne, we may mention the ex-Roman Catholic, Charles Mongan, said to be the son of a strolling piper, who after a varied career became Bishop of Limerick and as Dr. Charles Mongan Warburton (his wife's name) was in favour at the Vice-regal Court, but by no means inattentive to the affairs of his diocese.

III

Extended mention is really due to a forgotten worthy who made no small stir in his day, Robert Clayton, Bishop in succession of Killala, Cork, and Clogher. His father had been Dean of Kildare, and a keen chemist and scientist. Robert (born 1695) inherited his father's interests and in 1714 became a Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin. For fourteen years he engaged in Biblical and patristic study, and in the natural sciences, and on his father's death resigned his fellowship and married Catherine Donnellan, a descendant of Archbishop Donnellan of Tuam, who had translated the New Testament into Irish, thus laying the foundation of Bishop Bedell's translation, once well-known in Gaelic-speaking Scotland. Through Clayton's generosity in the matter of legacies to his sister-in-law Anne, she was enabled to establish the Donnellan Lectures in Trinity College, Dublin.

Clayton and his wife resided for a time in London and were introduced into the literary circles presided over by Queen Caroline. In this way Clayton came under the influence of Dr. Samuel Clarke, the leader of Arian opinion in England. The Arian movement is perhaps a forgotten page in English Church history,[1] but to it Clayton gave his life on his return to Ireland. Not even the arguments of the great Waterland

[1] See Colligan, *The Arian Movement in England.* Abbey and Overton, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century.* Leslie Stephen, *English Thought.* Hunt, *Religious Thought in England.*

could shake him in this heterodoxy. Court influence procured him the bishopric of Killala, and he returned home to study, to entertain, both in Killala and Dublin, and to occupy himself with such diocesan business as was appropriate to an eighteenth century bishop. He wrote a good deal in defence of the truthfulness of the Bible narratives against such sceptical writers as Lord Bolingbroke.

Home in Ireland Clayton proved to be a lively ecclesiastic of excellent qualities, and great liberality to the poor.[1] He preached a good deal, and one characteristic sermon of his delivered before the Incorporated Society for Promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland with the title "The Religion of Labour" contains a curious reflection on the Methodists. He says: "The praise of labour and industry is necessary because of the rise of a sect which 'under the pretence of devotion to God would, instead of spade and plough, leave nothing in the hands of children but manuals of piety.'

"All our duties required of us consist entirely of this, that we do all that lies in our power to make ourselves and our neighbours as happy as we possibly can, and that we do nothing which may contribute to the contrary. Labour is the way to acquire riches which furnish us with the comforts of life. Labour contributes to our happiness in a future life as towards preserving our virtue and innocence in this. Idleness is the root of all evil. Our duty is to do all that lies in our power to improve ourselves and our neighbours. This is the only service we can possibly do unto God.

"For this reason it is part of the legislative power in every society to limit the number of those persons who are to give up their time to propagating religion—everyone that is more than necessary is a useless member of the Commonwealth." This last statement is a criticism directed against the Methodists and Quakers.

As a biblical scholar Clayton was worthy of comparison with the best of his day, in spite of his capacity for social life and his luxurious mode of living, both in Dublin and in the country. His wife was one of the most fashionable hostesses in the capital, and if we judged the Claytons by what we are told, for example by Dr. Constantia Maxwell in her studies in the life of the eighteenth century in Ireland we would dismiss

[1] See Burdy's *Life of Philip Skelton.*

the bishop as a mere courtier. The extensive studies of Scriptural matters which engaged Clayton have one striking aspect, in which he shows himself in advance of the scholarship of his day. He became deeply interested in the reports brought to Europe by Roman Catholic missionaries of ancient and indecipherable inscriptions among the ruins about Mount Sinai. He published an account of these, and believed that they would throw light on the ancient Hebrew language. So keen was he on this that he offered the Royal Society £500 to enable it to send an archaeologist for six months to Mount Sinai to try to discover the meaning of the inscriptions. This offer was not accepted, but an English traveller who did visit the place reported that the inscriptions were spoilt by being everywhere interspersed by figures of men and beasts. He discovered, he said, "nothing important would be the outcome of the discovery". It may be claimed that Clayton was one of the first to attempt a practical step towards the modern science of biblical archaeology. It is not inappropriate that he should have been a Fellow of the same College which gave to archaeology the distinguished Edward Hincks.

It has been noted that Clayton was a disciple of the heterodox Dr. Clarke. His chief work in this connection was the publication of an "Essay on Spirit" in 1757. It has been frequently stated that the work was not by him, but by a young clergyman of his diocese of Clogher who was afraid to publish under his own name. Yet it contains so much that Clayton wrote and said elsewhere that it is in all probability his own. The essay is avowedly Arian, and is a plea for the simplest and most scriptural language in relation to the Godhead. Clayton's ambition was to attract to the Established Church the liberally-minded Presbyterians who no longer subscribed ex animo to the Westminster Confession. He was on very friendly terms with many of them, and so he wrote in the Essay: "All points of doctrine should be as plain, as few, as fundamental as possible." Not until the Council of Nicaea, he said, was subscription demanded to the doctrine of the Consubstantiality of the Son and the Father. "I apprehend that the Church of Ireland doth not set up for Infallibility—I do not think she requireth any other kind of subscription than such as is necessary for peace and quietness." Assent, he held, should be to the *use* of the Book of Common Prayer, which was the original purpose of

the Act of Uniformity, not to the truth of every statement therein. A study of the pre-Nicene fathers would show, he thought, that the doctrine of Arius is either a truth, or at least, no damnable heresy. The Reformation, he felt, had not gone far enough and he developed this by a reference to Chillingworth, who said that the doctrine of the Trinity is as certainly revealed in Matthew xxviii. 19 as the doctrine of the Eucharist is in Matthew xxvi. 26; but the Scriptures are as silent about the consubstantiality of the one as about the transubstantiation of the other—whence came these doctrines? From the papal chair!

This publication in 1757 prevented Clayton receiving the Archbishopric of Tuam, and the controversies caused had scarcely died away when he made a speech in the Irish House of Lords urging that the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds should be deleted from the Prayer Book. That such a proposal could be seriously made shows how undogmatic the prevailing tone of Church life was in those days. Clayton spoke of these creeds as an obstacle to the union of Protestants. "The Nicene fathers were not infallible; it is absolutely contradictory of the fundamental principles on which the Reformation of the Protestant religion from Popery is built to have any doctrine established as a rule of faith which is founded purely upon tradition, and is not plainly and clearly revealed in Scripture. Athanasius was a young, forward, petulant deacon of ambitious spirit with a talent for disputation. He could have no hope of getting the bishopric of Alexandria unless he could get Arius, the leading presbyter, out."

IV

The points enumerated by the Bishop were: 1. To make easy the reconciliation of dissenters. 2. The *use* of the Prayer Book is all that is demanded. 3. Nothing not plainly taught in Scripture should be demanded. 4. The Athanasian Creed is too metaphysical for public services. It is of interest to note that this fourth objection was recognised as a valid one when the Irish Book of Common Prayer came to be revised after the disestablishment of the Church in 1870, and the rubric directing the saying of the Creed on certain days was rescinded. When a vote was taken in the House of Lords on this proposal

only four temporal peers supported Clayton. The chief opponent he had was the Lord Primate, Dr. Stone. In the Matcham MSS. (Historical MSS. Commission Reports) there is a letter which describes the debate and concludes by saying: " This matter will undoubtedly be much spoken of through the Christian world."

Again the storm died away, but the indefatigable Bishop then published the third part of a work on the Old and New Testaments (an answer to Lord Bolingbroke), on which he had been engaged for some years. In this he vigorously attacked the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and at last his fellow bishops determined to seek his deposition. Whether through shock at this turn of events, or from a more ordinary cause, the Bishop died before his trial took place. Whatever value may be attached to Clayton's literary work, we can scarcely endorse the bludgeon attack of Dr. Warburton (Author of *The Divine Legation of Moses*) who wrote: " The Bishop of Clogher or some such heathenish name in Ireland has published a book. It is made up out of the rubbish of old heresies of a much ranker cast than common Arianism. This might be heresy in an English Bishop, but in an Irish one it is only a blunder."

I have written at length upon Clayton, not because he is important, but because his career illustrates the spirit of tolerance of unorthodox opinion which was a feature of the century. Clayton had faults, but he had virtues. He was good to the poor, tolerant and comprehensive in his churchmanship. His learning was not contemptible, and perhaps he only seemed above his brethren in this, that he had the candour to publish his real sentiments. Dr. Constantia Maxwell has spoken of him as a " free-thinking Bishop ". This is very inaccurate. The term " free-thinker " was used of the Deist in the eighteenth century, but not of the Arian, and Clayton's answers to Bolingbroke are evidence of his entire disagreement with Deism. What he tried to do was to re-create what he conceived pre-Nicene Christianity to have been.

It is probably true that Clayton's influence was felt among the Presbyterians of his diocese. There was at that time a good deal of friendly intercourse between their ministers and the Established clergy. When Dr. Leland, the well-known author of *A History of Deism*, and Minister of a Dublin Presbyterian Church, published his sermons in four volumes, the Primate and

fourteen bishops paid him the compliment of subscribing for sets.

It is regrettable, I think, that Dr. Killen in his continuation of Dr. Reid's *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* should have portrayed the Established Church of the time in such dark colours. He describes it as "a most melancholy spectacle", its nominal adherents "sunk in infidelity", and "not one active minister in every county who preached evangelical doctrine". For these sentiments he depended largely upon *The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, a work of great value, but apt to give the impression that all was dark until the agents of the Countess brought a new dawn.

We need to keep in mind that the state of religious affairs in Ireland was not peculiar. In Great Britain and abroad the same conditions existed; a spiritual winter in which the sharp winds of rationalism nipped and shrivelled budding piety, the ice-age of religion when enthusiasm was more to be feared than indifference. Other Churches showed signs of the blighting effect of the age as well as the Church of Ireland. We may instance the Church of Scotland. It is described by Dr. Cunningham (*Church History of Scotland*) thus: "The churches were falling down; more like cattle sheds than churches with their broken windows and earthen floors. The age was bound up with the cerements of spiritual death." Principal Tulloch speaks of public devotion being carried on with "a careless indifference of manner if not of heart". As to pastoral work in that period in Scotland the words of Dr. Chalmers in 1805 are evidence of the low standard prevailing generally: "After the satisfactory discharge of his parish duties a minister may enjoy five days of uninterrupted leisure for the prosecution of any science to which his taste may dispose him." (In later life Dr. Chalmers changed his view of the ministerial office.) As to Church discipline in Scotland, Dr. Hetherington (*History of the Church of Scotland*) summarises the effect of Moderation when he speaks of the culpable leniency of Church Courts to clerical delinquents, of the frequency of cases of immorality, "the truth stifled, faithfulness punished, piety expelled, conscience outraged, heresy protected, immorality uncensured". Allowing this to be an exaggerated picture, it at least teaches us not to condemn one single Church for failings common to all. It may be true that in Ireland the bishops rarely laboured to promote the spiritual

interests of their dioceses as they are wont to do to-day, though one must not generalise, but we have the testimony of Froude that "of the poor rectors and curates there was generally an honourable report".

V

The parish work of the clergy was handicapped in predominantly Roman Catholic surroundings and by the fact that in large areas their parishioners were Irish-speaking. When benefices were conferred upon Englishmen the language difficulty made their residence merely nominal. When it was urged that the clergy should learn Irish and labour to convert the people through it, the well-known Dr. Woodward, Bishop of Cloyne, replied that the Government should suppress the Irish language. There were obvious limits to the sagacity of a Georgian Bishop! The difficulties of the Church were actually real enough. In the middle of the century the selfish policy of the landlords drove large numbers of Irish Protestants off the land, and to North America. The landlords, often regarded as pillars of the establishment, were in many ways its enemies. Selfish and irresponsible, they valued the Church as a place of good livings, deaneries and bishoprics for the express benefit of their families. Added to this was the difficulty created by episcopal and viceregal patronage. More than half the bishops in one period were importations from England; young men sent over as chaplains to the Lords Lieutenant, and such like. As the usual tenure of the Lord Lieutenancy was about two years it is easy to see how rapidly all the best preferment would be monopolised at the expense of Irishmen. These English bishops naturally gave their best livings to their fellow countrymen. Typical of what went on is a letter from the historian Wilkins to Nicholson, an Englishman who was Bishop of Derry, to the effect that there was a curate in London who publicly prayed for the Bishop and his family, and asking if there was not a parish in Derry diocese this good man could be given. Froude says that the practical work of religion was done by the native clergy of Irish birth. The well-known Philip Skelton is an example, though a Dr. Peckwell, a Lincolnshire rector who came to Ireland under the aegis of the Countess of Huntingdon, said that Skelton knew nothing of the grace of God!

Dr. J. T. Ball[1] correctly describes the situation when he attributes the low spiritual condition of the Church to the fact that "the discipline of character which is supplied by visiting, instructing the young, and consoling the sick and suffering was wholly wanting". Non-residence, due to the fewness of glebe houses, pluralities, and the reluctance of English clergy to live in wild remote places had thoroughly bad effect. In England, as we know, pluralities in the eighteenth century were a serious weakness to the Church. How much more in a country where Protestants were a minority? In 1764 Sir William Osborne in the Irish House of Commons moved for a return to be made of the non-resident clergy. Sir Lucius O'Brien, M.P. for the borough of Ennis, in debate, said that of the seventy-six parishes of Co. Clare only fourteen had churches, and most rectors were non-resident and without curates. Established Church people, he added, had to go to Roman Catholic priests for marriages, baptisms and burials.

Twenty years later Sir Henry Cavendish proposed in the House of Commons that a return should be made to the House of the clergy who resided and performed duty from June 1, 1782 to July 1, 1783. He said that this would produce residence where there was no residence, and divine service where there was no divine service: "the sick will have the comforts of religion where they are sometimes sought in vain, and the public mind will be satisfied that this House expects attention to duty from the clergy." This goes near to the root of the problem, but it is tragic that the Commons should be asked to superintend what was obviously the task of the Bishops. John Philpot Curran, the orator, said in debate that the Irish clergy were all satisfactory, but that the English bishops were the source of the trouble. These men came to Ireland to secure fortunes and to establish landed families, and most of them succeeded, and in many cases passed into the peerage. It is little to be wondered at that but small result followed such unapostolic labour.

VI

We may now look briefly at the revival of personal religion which in the wisdom of Providence came to restore the Church's

[1] J. T. Ball, *History of the Reformed Church in Ireland.*

spiritual life. This revival may be dated roughly about the year 1738 when George Whitefield came to Limerick from North America, and was welcomed to St. Mary's Cathedral. The Bishop (Dr. Burscough) made much of him, and wished him to reside at his house for a long visit. Years after Whitefield had evidence of the lasting impression made by his sermons in Limerick. It was not chance that drove his half-wrecked vessel upon the western shores of Ireland. Leaving Limerick, Whitefield came to Dublin and was warmly received by the Primate (Dr. Boulter), by the Bishop of Derry (Dr. Rundle, a friend of Jonathan Swift) and Dean Delany. It is remarkable that this young man, distinguished in the world only for enthusiastic, or as his opponents might have said, fanatical preaching, of humble birth, and mediocre education, should have been so well and cordially received by the prelates mentioned. Boulter was the expert engineer of Irish politics in the English interest. He ruled the Church as an adjunct to the English imperium. Nothing he wrote records any profound religious sentiments. His two volumes of letters are almost entirely concerned with State business. We must allow that in spite of appearances he had a lively interest in spiritual affairs; otherwise we cannot explain his attention to the ardent preacher whose place in the world was so different from the Primate's. It may be remarked that Whitefield stood in more amiable relationship to Irish bishops than John Wesley ever did, though Wesley had greater culture and ample learning. Perhaps Whitefield, that "true, moderate, Catholic presbyter of the Church of England" as he described himself, showed less tendency to establish a following of his own than John Wesley.

After Whitefield came the Wesleys and John Cennick who had the earnest approval of Dr. Ryder, Bishop of Down and Connor. No one in Ireland described Whitefield (or his friends) as some in Scotland described him, "an abjured prelatic hireling advancing the Kingdom of Satan".

A key to the spread in all classes of society of evangelical principles will be found in the amazing influence of the Countess of Huntingdon who gathered a select body of clergy as her chaplains, and encouraged them to adopt the career of itinerating evangelists. In addition she established a college for training ministers for her Connexion, which became a sort of Church-Methodist community, and later a form of Congregationalism.

One of the Irish clergymen who identified himself with the work supervised by the Countess was the Honourable Walter Shirley, a relative, who absented himself for long periods from his parish of Loughrea, Co. Galway (where, however, he employed a capable curate) to preach in different places. On his return to reside in Loughrea his Bishop, Dr. Cope of Clonfert, wrote to him as follows—" In case of your return to Loughrea I fairly warn you to lay aside your exceptionable doctrines, for without entering into paper controversy I must and surely will proceed in the most effectual manner to suppress all such". Shirley replied—" Menaces, my Lord, between gentlemen are illiberal; but when they cannot be put into execution, they are contemptible". Twenty years earlier a Bishop of Clonfert, Dr. Denison Cumberland (father of Richard Cumberland the dramatist) had tried to secure the help of the Archbishop of Tuam, his Metropolitan, to suppress Shirley, but had been laughed at for his pains, and told that Shirley's teaching was that of the Thirty-Nine Articles.

In Dublin the Magdalen Chapel was the evangelical centre to which earnest preaching drew large numbers, and from which spread a deep spiritual influence. Several other city churches experienced a re-birth of devotion. A dissenting congregation under Huntingdon auspices formed in Plunket Street, and many who sought earnest experimental preaching allied to the liturgical forms of the Church combined to erect on the northern side of the city and convenient to an extensive district of fashionable streets a new place of worship which was called " Bethesda ". This church was opened in 1786. There John Wesley and others, including Rowland Hill preached. An early chaplain of this church was Dr. John Walker, a Fellow of Trinity College who later seceded from the Church of Ireland, and resigning his fellowship formed a sect known as the Walkerites (not unlike the groups later gathered by Cronin, Groves, Bellett and Darby). More effective than Walker was W. B. Matthias who for many years exercised a ministry which brought untold blessing to the Church. His was the most formative single influence on the life of the Church in the succeeding century. Reference may be made to the work of the Rev. Singleton Harpur, curate of St. Mary's parish for several years, who was one of the earliest to demand State control of the liquor trade in the interests of temperance, and who

in conjunction with Dr. O'Connor, F.T.C.D., and a bookseller named Wm. Watson formed in 1792 an Association for Discountenancing Vice and Promoting Christian Knowledge. This Association has been doing valuable work for Christian education for the past century and a half.

Country clergymen like Peter Roe of Kilkenny and large numbers of country gentry came under deep conviction and their faith and example rapidly leavened all grades of society, so that by the end of the century a silent revolution had taken place. It is not unimportant to note that complaints were sometimes made by Methodist preachers that the Church was under "the blighting influence of predestinarian doctrines", which indicates that the spiritual life of the Church was built upon the principles of Reformed theology.

These fragmentary notes do not profess to portray an epoch, but may serve to show the character of a period when the Church of Ireland suffered in common with other Churches from the typical ailments of a remarkable century. In history, as in the newspapers, the startling, the unusual, the scandalous, are recorded. The unpretentious and normal have no chroniclers. We may be satisfied that conditions were not as bad as hostile critics suggest, while they were far from being as good as they could easily have been. Evangelicals are prone, one fears, to accentuate the vices and shortcomings of their age; yet the breakers of the Evangelical revival of the eighteenth century, rather than the ripples of the Oxford Movement of the nineteenth moulded to enduring form the lineaments of the Established Church, and now, seventy years after the end of its State connection, its pulse still quickens to the simple realities of the gospel proclaimed in the days of George III.

N. D. Emerson.

St. Mary's,
Dublin.