

THE

# LIFE OF THE REV. JOHN WESLEY.

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### C H A P T E R I .

CONTAINING A VIEW OF MR. WESLEY'S LABORS AS AN ITINERANT PREACHER,  
AND OF THE FORMATION OF SOCIETIES, &c. TILL THE FIRST METHODIST-  
CONFERENCE, IN 1744.

I HAVE NOW traced the steps of Mr. Wesley, from his infancy to the present period, which forms an important era in his life. He now commenced a Field-preacher, as he was called, and itinerancy naturally followed, which laid the foundation of the present system of Methodism. It has often been suggested by his opponents, that the plan of Methodism was the result of a long premeditated design: but on a careful examination into the very *minutiae* of his life till this time, no such design appears. He positively asserts the contrary; and every circumstance collected from his private papers, confirms the truth of his assertion. It is indeed true, that by a strange chain of providences, he was admirably fitted without any design of his own, to prosecute the plan he now entered upon through all its consequences. After many years of painful labor and exercise of mind, he had obtained clear and distinct views of the gospel; and what was especially necessary to his success, he well understood the order observable in the gradations of christian experience, from the first commencement of a work of grace on the mind, to its consummation. He had long been inured to fatigue and hardship; a qualification highly necessary for the success of his present plan of proceedings. He had experienced great opposition, contempt, reproach, and even persecution, both in England and America; which made them appear in the prospect of his new undertaking less formidable to him, than they would have done to others. Most of the churches in London had been shut against him, so that his opportunities of preaching became very limited, and as he durst not be silent, he was reduced to a sort of necessity to preach in the open air, in opposition to his former notions and habits. But he observes, "I have since seen abundant

reason to adore the wise providence of God herein, making a way for myriads of people, who never troubled any church, or were likely so to do, to hear that word which they soon found to be the power of God unto salvation."

April 1. Mr. Whitefield having left Bristol, Mr. Wesley began to expound to a little society, accustomed to meet in Nicholas-Street, our Lord's sermon on the mount; "One pretty remarkable precedent," says he, "of field-preaching, though I suppose *there were churches* at that time also. Monday the second, I submitted to be *more vile*, and proclaimed in the highways the glad-tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people."—His preaching was attended with surprising success, so that in a very short time, a few, and afterwards a greater number, agreed to meet together, to edify and strengthen one another, as the people already did in London.

Mr. Wesley continued in Bristol and the neighboring places till June. He thus describes his public labors through the week. "My ordinary employment in public, was now as follows: every morning I read prayers and preached at Newgate. Every evening I expounded a portion of Scripture, at one or more of the societies. On Monday in the afternoon I preached abroad near Bristol; on Tuesday at Bath and Two-mile Hill, alternately. On Wednesday, at Baptist-Mills. Every other Thursday, near Pensford. Every other Friday, in another part of Kingswood. On Saturday in the afternoon, and Sunday morning, in the Bowling-Green. On Sunday at eleven, near Hannam-Mount; at two at Clifton; at five, at Rose-Green. And hitherto, *as my day is*, so is my strength."—He tells us, he could scarcely reconcile himself at first, to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which Mr. Whitefield had set him the example; "Having been," says he, "till very lately so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls *almost a sin*, if it had not been done *in a church*."

During this summer, his preaching at Bristol was attended with some extraordinary circumstances, which made much noise, and gave great offence. Under the sermon, some persons trembled from head to foot: others, fell down and cried out with a loud and bitter cry: whilst others became speechless, and seemed convulsed as if in the agonies of death. After prayer for them, many rose up rejoicing in God, and testifying, they had redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.—Some afterwards said, they had so strong a representation of Christ to their mind at that time, that it seemed like a vision of him, evidently set forth crucified among them: and in that moment they were enabled to believe on him. Others pretended they had a similar representation of him in a dream, and through faith received the remission of sins. No regard ought to be had to these declarations, as evidences of conversion; because the judgment of these persons must be greatly

confused, while their passions were so much agitated. Mr. Wesley himself, at first knew not how he ought to judge of these extraordinary things; but when he found that most of the persons so affected, held fast their confidence, and walked worthy of their christian calling, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, he could not deny that there was a real genuine work of grace upon their minds. He did not however consider agitations, visions, or dreams, as any evidence of a true conversion to God; but as adventitious or accidental circumstances, which from various causes might, or might not, attend it: and this view of them, he thought perfectly consistent with Scripture. The gentle manner in which, under these views, he spake of them was generally misunderstood, raised up several adversaries, and made the good that was really done, be evil spoken of. He gave a particular account from time to time of the things that happened, to such ministers as he thought sincerely desired the increase of God's kingdom, and had some experience of it. Mr. Ralph Erskine was very favorable in his judgment of these adventitious circumstances; and says, "I desire to bless my Lord, for the great and good news your letter bears, about the Lord's turning many souls 'from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God;' and that such a great and effectual door is opened among you as the many adversaries cannot shut.—As to the outward manner you speak of, wherein most of them were affected who were cut to the heart by the sword of the spirit, no wonder this was at first surprising to you, since they are indeed so very rare, that have been thus pricked and wounded. Yet some of the instances you give, seem to be exemplified in the outward manner wherein Paul, and the jailor, were at first affected; as also Peter's hearers, Acts ii.—What influence sudden and sharp awakenings may have on the body, I pretend not to explain: but I make no question satan, so far as he gets power, may exert himself on such occasions, partly to hinder the good work in the persons thus touched with the sharp arrows of conviction, and partly to disparage the work of God, as if it tended to lead people to distraction.—However, the merciful issue of the conflicts in the conversion of the persons thus affected, is the main thing.

"All the outward appearances of people's being affected among us, may be reduced to these two sorts; one is, hearing with a close, silent attention, with gravity and greediness, discovered by fixed looks, weeping eyes, and sorrowful or joyful countenances; another sort is, when they lift up their voice aloud, some more depressedly, and others more highly; and at times the whole multitude in a flood of tears, all as it were crying out at once, till their voices be ready to drown the minister's, that he can scarce be heard for the weeping noise that surrounds him.—The influence on some of these, like a land flood, dries up; we hear of no change wrought. But on others it appears in the fruits of righteousness, and the tract of a holy conversation."

It seems from this letter, that Mr. Wesley was not the only gospel minister, whose discourses were, at certain times, attended with uncommon effects on the minds of the hearers.

Mr. Samuel Wesley judged much more unfavorably of the outward circumstances attending his brother's preaching; and in some respects denied the assurance of the pardon of sins, which the people professed to experience. A correspondence took place on these subjects, between him and Mr. John Wesley, a part of which has already been published by Dr. Priestley, in his collection of *Original Letters by the Rev. John Wesley,* &c. But as this correspondence stands there in a mutilated state, it may mislead the judgment of some persons, not much acquainted with the history of *Methodism*: I therefore think it necessary, that the reader may do justice to Mr. Wesley's character, to give a more complete view of it, and occasionally to add a remark for further illustration of the subject.

This correspondence commenced in the latter end of the year 1738; but I have referred the account of it to this place, that I might give the whole of it together. The first letter on this controversy, which has been preserved, was written by Mr. John Wesley, and dated the 30th of October. He observes to his brother Samuel, "That you will always receive kindly, what is so intended, I doubt not.—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. Some measure of this faith, which bringeth salvation or victory over sin, and which implies peace and trust in God through *Christ*, I do now enjoy by his free mercy: though in very deed, it is in me but as a grain of mustard seed: for the *πληροφορία πίστεως*, 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 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 which I take to be the witness of the Spirit with our spirit, that we are the sons of God) I believe to be Christians in that imperfect sense wherein I call myself such; and I exhort them to pray, that God would give them also, 'to rejoice in hope of the glory of God,' and to feel his 'love shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them.'

"On men I build not, neither on Matilda Chipman's word, whom I have not talked with five minutes in my life; nor anything peculiar in the weak, well-meant relation of William Hervey, who yet is a serious humble acting Christian. But have you built nothing on these? Yes; I find them more or less, in almost every letter you have written on the subject. Yet were all that has been said on *visions, dreams, and balls of fire*, to be fairly proposed in syllogisms, I believe it would not prove a jot more on one, than on the other side of the question.

"O brother, would to God you would leave disputing concerning the things which you know not, if indeed you know them not, and beg of God to fill up what is wanting in you. Why should not you also seek till you receive, 'that peace of God which passeth 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 hearts, by his spirit which dwelleth in you, and be sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise, which is the earnest of your inheritance."

November 15. Mr. Samuel Wesley, answered, "I have many remarks to make on your letter, but do not care to fight in the dark, or run my head against a stone wall. You need fear no controversy with me, unless you hold it worth while to remove these three doubts.—1. Whether you will own, or disown in terms, the necessity of a sensible information from God of pardon? If you disown it, the matter is over as to you: if you own it, then, 2. Whether you will not think me distracted, to oppose you with the most infallible of all proofs, inward feeling in yourself, and positive evidence in your friends, while I myself produce neither. 3. Whether you will release me from the horns of your dilemma, that I must either talk without knowledge like a fool, or against it like a knave? I conceive neither part strikes—for a man may reasonably argue against what he never felt, and may honestly deny what he has felt, to be necessary to others.

"You build nothing on tales, but I do. I see what is manifestly built upon them; if you disclaim it, and warn poor shallow pates of

their folly and danger, so much the better. They are counted signs or tokens, means or conveyances, proofs or evidences, of the sensible information, &c. calculated to turn fools into madmen, and put them without a jest, into the condition of Oliver's porter.—When I hear visions, &c. reproved, discouraged, and ceased among the new brotherhood, I shall then say no more of them; but till then, I will use my utmost strength which God shall give me, to expose these bad branches of a bad root.

“Such doctrine as encourages, and abets, spiritual fire-balls, apparitions of the Father, &c., &c., is delusive and dangerous: but the sensible information, &c. is such; *ergo*.—I mention not this to enter into any dispute with you, for you seem to disapprove, though not expressly disclaim them; but to convince you I am not out of my way, though encountering of wind-mills.”

This letter appears to be full of fallacy. To give one instance. Mr. J. Wesley had said, the witness of the spirit was the common privilege of believers: that he considered joy in the Holy Ghost, the love of God, and the *plerophory* of faith, as the witness of the Spirit with our spirit, that we are the sons of God: that the whole of what had been said on “visions, dreams, and balls of fire,” could not, in his opinion, either prove or disprove the point in question between them; that is, visions, dreams, and balls of fire, were totally foreign to the witness of the Spirit, for which he was contending. But his brother Samuel changes the term *witness*, and substitutes for it, *sensible information*; by which he means, something visible to the sight, or existing in the fancy, and then indeed visions, &c. were connected with the question; and he reasons on this supposition. But this was a mere sophism, of which Mr. J. Wesley would probably have taken notice had he been writing to a stranger, or had he foreseen that any one would print the letters after his death. November 30. He replied to his brother Samuel, and tells him, “I believe every Christian who has not yet received it, ought to pray for, ‘the witness of God’s Spirit with his spirit, that he is a child of God!’ In being a child of God, the pardon of his sins is included: therefore I believe the Spirit of God will witness this also. That this witness is from God, the very terms imply; and this witness I believe is necessary for my salvation. How far invincible ignorance may excuse others, I know not.

“But this you say, is delusive and dangerous, ‘Because it encourages and abets, idle visions and dreams.’ It ‘encourages’—True; accidentally, but not essentially. And that it does this accidentally, or that weak minds may pervert it to an ill use, is no reasonable objection against it: for so they may pervert every truth in the oracles of God; more especially that dangerous doctrine of Joel, cited by St. Peter: ‘It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your

daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.'—Such visions indeed, as you mention are given up: does it follow that visions and dreams in general, are bad branches of a bad root? God forbid. This would prove more than you desire."

December 13. Mr. Samuel Wesley again wrote to his brother. He now discussed the matter a little more soberly, and kept closer to the point in debate. He says, "That you were not a Christian before May, in your sense, any one may allow: but have you ever since continued sinless?—'Sin has not the dominion!' Do you never then fall? Or, do you mean no more, than that you are free from presumptuous sins? If the former, I deny it: if the latter, who disputes? Your misapplication of the witness of the spirit is so thoroughly cleared by Bishop Bull, that I shall not hold a candle to the sun. What portion of love, joy, &c. God may please to bestow on Christians, is in his hand, not ours. Those texts you quote no more prove them generally necessary, in what you call your imperfect state, than, 'rejoice in the Lord always,' contradicts—'Blessed are they that mourn'—I had much more to say, but it will keep, if ever it should be proper."

In the beginning of the present year, 1739, Mr. J. Wesley replied to his brother. A part of this letter I have not been able to find.\* In what remains, he tells him, "I think Bishop Bull's sermon on the witness of the Spirit (against the witness of the Spirit it should rather be entitled) is full of gross perversions of Scripture; and manifest contradictions both to Scripture and experience. I find more persons, day by day, who experience a clear evidence of their being in a state of salvation. But I never said this continues equally clear in all, as long as they continue in a state of salvation. Some indeed have testified, and the whole tenor of their life made their testimony unexceptionable, that, from that hour they have felt no agonies at all, no anxious fears, no sense of dereliction. Others have.

"But I much fear, we begin our dispute at the wrong end. I fear you *dissent* from the fundamental Articles of the Church of England. I know Bishop Bull does—I doubt you do not hold justification by faith alone: if not, neither do you hold, what our Articles teach concerning the extent and guilt of original sin: neither do you feel yourself a lost sinner; and if we begin not here, we are building on the sand. O may the God of love, if my sister or you are otherwise minded, reveal even this unto you."

\* Mr. Wesley's papers have been separated, and parts of them selected several times, I believe for the Magazines, and for his other publications: for some years also, they have been so much exposed to various persons, that probably some have been lost. On these accounts they are, as might be expected, much mangled, and on many subjects rendered very defective.

“ *Tiverton, March 26.* ”

“ DEAR JACK,

“ I might as well have wrote immediately after your last, as now, for any new information that I expected from my mother: and I might as well let it alone at present, for any effect it will have, farther than showing you, I neither despise you on the one hand, nor am angry with you on the other. I am persuaded you will hardly see me face to face in this world, though somewhat nearer than Count Zinzendorf. Charles has at last told me in terms—he believes no more of dreams and visions than I do. Had you said so, I believe I should hardly have spent any time upon them; though I find others credit them, whatever you may do. You make two degrees or kinds of assurance; that neither of them are necessary to a state of salvation, I prove thus;

“ 1. Because multitudes are saved without either. These are of three sorts, 1. All infants baptised, who die before actual sin. 2. All persons of a melancholy and gloomy constitution; who, without a miracle, cannot be changed. 3. All penitents, who live a good life after their recovery, and yet never attain to their first state.

“ 2. The lowest assurance is an impression from God who is infallible, that heaven shall be actually enjoyed by the person to whom it is made. How is this consistent with fears of miscarriage: with deep sorrow, and going on the way weeping? How can any doubt, after such certificate? If they can, then here is an assurance whereby the person who has it is not sure.

“ 3. If this be essential to a state of salvation, it is utterly impossible any should fall from that state finally: since, how can any thing be more fixed, than what Truth and Power has said he will perform? Unless you will say of the matter here, as I observed of the person, that there may be assurance wherein the thing itself is not certain. We join in love. I am your affectionate friend and brother,

“ S. WESLEY. ”

April 4. Mr. John Wesley replied from Bristol. “ I rejoice greatly,” says he, “ at the temper with which you now write, and trust there is not only mildness, but love in your heart. If so, you shall know of this doctrine, whether it be of God; though perhaps not by my ministry.

“ To this hour you have pursued an *ignoratio elenchi*. Your assurance and mine are as different as light from darkness. I mean, an assurance that I am now in a state of salvation; you, an assurance that I shall persevere therein. The very definition of the term cuts off your second and third observation. As to the first I would take notice; 1. No kind of assurance, that I know, or of faith, or repentance, is essential to their salvation who die infants. 2. I believe God is ready to give all true penitents, who fly to his grace in Christ, a fuller sense of pardon than they had before they fell. I know this to



be true of several; whether these are exempt cases I know not. 3. Persons that were of a melancholy and gloomy constitution, even to some degree of madness, I have known brought in a moment (let it be called a miracle, I quarrel not) into a state of firm lasting peace and joy.

“My dear brother, the whole question turns chiefly, if not wholly on matter of fact. You deny, that God does now work these effects: at least, that he works them in such a manner. I affirm both because I have heard those facts with my ears, and seen them with my eyes. I have seen, as far as it can be seen, very many persons changed in a moment, from the spirit of horror, fear, and despair, to the spirit of hope, joy, peace; and from sinful desires, till then reigning over them, to a pure desire of doing the will of God. These are matters of fact, whereof I have been, and almost daily am, eye or ear witness. This I know, several persons in whom this great change from the power of satan unto God, was wrought either in sleep, or during a strong representation to the eye of their minds of Christ, either on the cross, or in glory. This is the fact. Let any judge of it as they please. But that such a change was then wrought, appears not from their shedding tears only, or sighing, or singing psalms, but from the whole tenor of their life, till then many ways wicked; from that time holy, just, and good.

“I will show you him that was a lion till then, and is now a lamb; he that was a drunkard, but now exemplarily sober: the whore-monger that was, who now abhors the very lusts of the flesh. These are my living arguments for what I assert, that God now, as aforetime, gives remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost; which may be called visions.”

April 16. Mr. Samuel Wesley rejoined. “I find brevity has made me obscure. I argue against assurance in your, or any sense, as part of the gospel covenant; because many are saved without it—you own you cannot deny exempt cases, which is giving up the dispute. *Your assurance*, being a clear impression of God upon the soul, I say must be perpetual—must be irreversible. Else it is not assurance from God, infallible and omnipotent. You say the cross is strongly represented to the eye of the mind.—Do these words signify in plain English, the *fancy*? Inward eyes, ears, and feelings, are nothing to other people. I am heartily sorry such alloy should be found among so much piety.”

We now see this controversy reduced to two points: *assurance* itself, and the manner of receiving it. Mr. John Wesley still maintained his former positions, and, May 10, tells his brother, “The gospel promises to you and me, and to our children, and to all that are afar off, even as many of those whom the Lord our God shall call, as are not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ‘the witness of God’s Spirit with their spirit, that they are the children of God:’ that

they are now, at this hour, all accepted in the beloved : but it witnesses not, that they always shall be.' It is an assurance of present salvation only ; therefore not necessarily perpetual, neither irreversible.

" I am one of many witnesses of this matter of fact, that God does now make good this his promise daily, very frequently during a representation (how made I know not, but not to the outward eye) of Christ, either hanging on the cross, or standing on the right hand of God. This I know to be of God, because from that hour the person so affected is a new creature, both as to his inward tempers and outward life. Old things are passed away ; and all things become new."

Mr. Wesley did not remember, that after this time he received any letter from his brother. But there is one in Dr. Priestley's collection, signed Samuel Wesley, and addressed to his brother John ; in which he tells him, " you yourself doubted at first, and inquired, and examined about the extacies ; the matter therefore, is not so plain as motion to a man walking. But I have my own reason, as well as your own authority, against the exceeding clearness of divine interposition there. Your followers fall into agonies. I confess it. They are freed from them after you have prayed over them. Granted. They say it is God's doing. I own they say so. Dear brother, where is your ocular demonstration ? Where, indeed, the rational proof ? Their living well afterwards may be a probable and sufficient argument, that they believe themselves ; but it goes no further."

Upon a review of the whole of this controversy, we may safely pronounce that the doctrine of assurance is in no respect invalidated, or rendered doubtful by any thing Mr. Samuel Wesley has said against it. But the subject will be further considered in reviewing Mr. Wesley's doctrines. Mr. John Wesley affirmed, that he had known several persons, who had received this assurance of the pardon of sins, in a kind of vision or dream ; but his brother's objections against the possibility of his knowing this, are in general convincing and satisfactory. Indeed there could be no evidence of this, but their own testimony ; which, if convinced of their sincerity, Mr. Wesley was always too much disposed to believe. It is true, he built no fundamental doctrine of the gospel, on the testimony persons gave of their own experience ; but some of his opinions in matters of less importance, and in which he appeared most singular, were chiefly supported by such kind of evidence, which the goodness of his own mind disposed him to receive as a sufficient proof.

It is observable in the course of this dispute, that Mr. Samuel Wesley's mind was much softened towards his brother ; and the opposition he at first made against his brother's doctrine, and manner of proceeding, became less violent. In the last letter he wrote, he says not a word against assurance, though he does against the manner in

which it was said persons had received it. This seems to imply, that he no longer opposed the thing itself, when properly explained and guarded. At the bottom of the last letter but one, he addressed his brother in these words, *Τὸ λοιπὸν, ἀδελφοῦ, προσεύχεσθον περὶ ἡμῶν. κ. τ. λ.\** “Finally, brethren, pray ye both for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you.” See Thess. iii. 1. A strange address this, if he believed his two brothers were preaching false and dangerous doctrines! The truth seems to be, that he thought more favorably of their doctrines and methods of proceeding, when he wrote these words, than he did when they first set out.—After persevering fifty years, through all kinds of difficulty, the two brothers extorted from the public the same favorable opinion.

Some years after this period, Mr. Wesley expressed his opinion more fully concerning those agitations, &c. which attended the conviction of sin under his sermons this summer at Bristol. He supposes, it is easy to account for them either on principles of reason or Scripture. “First,” says he, “on principles of reason. For how easy is it to suppose that a strong, lively, and sudden apprehension of the heinousness of sin, the wrath of God, and the bitter pains of eternal death should affect the body as well as the soul, during the present laws of vital union; should interrupt or disturb the ordinary circulations, and put nature out of its course. Yea, we may question whether, while this union subsists, it be possible for the mind to be affected in so violent a degree, without some or other of those bodily symptoms following.

“It is likewise easy to account for these things on principles of Scripture. For when we take a view of them in this light, we are to add to the consideration of natural causes, the agency of those spirits who still excel in strength, and as far as they have leave from God, will not fail to torment whom they cannot destroy; to tear those that are coming to Christ. It is also remarkable, that there is plain Scripture precedent of every symptom which has lately appeared. So that we cannot allow even the conviction attended with these to be madness, without giving up both reason and Scripture.” †

After eight or nine days' absence, in which he came to London, Mr. Wesley returned to Bristol, and continued his labors with increasing success. He was now attacked by *friends* as well as enemies, for his irregularity. To a friend ‡ who had expostulated with him on this subject, he wrote his thoughts in a letter, of which the following is an extract. “As to your advice that I should settle in

\* I suppose he refers to his two brothers, John and Charles, as he has put the verb and noun in the dual number.

† Wesley's Works, vol. xiv. page 323.

‡ I believe, the late Rev. James Harvey, who had been his pupil; and was the author of *Theron and Aspasio; Meditations, &c. &c.*

college, I have no business there, having now no office, and no pupils. And whether the other branch of your proposal be expedient, viz. to accept of a cure of souls, it will be time enough to consider when one is offered to me. But in the mean time, you think, I ought to be still; because otherwise I should invade another's office.—You accordingly ask, how it is that I assemble Christians who are none of my charge, to sing psalms, and pray, and hear the Scriptures expounded: and think it hard to justify doing this, in other men's parishes, upon catholic principles?

“Permit me to speak plainly. If by catholic principles, you mean any other than spiritual, they weigh nothing with me: I allow no other rule, whether of faith or practice, than the holy Scriptures. But on scriptural principles, I do not think it hard to justify whatever I do. God in Scripture commands me, according to my power, to instruct the ignorant, reform the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this, in another's parish; that is, in effect, not to do it at all; seeing I have now no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall. Whom then shall I hear? God, or man? If it be just to obey man rather than God, judge you. A dispensation of the gospel is committed to me, and woe is me if I preach not the gospel. But where shall I preach it upon the principles you mention?—Not in any of the christian parts, at least, of the habitable earth. For all these are, after a sort, divided into parishes.—Suffer me to tell you my principles in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad-tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to: and sure I am, that his blessing attends it. Great encouragement have I therefore, to be faithful in fulfilling the work he hath given me to do. His servant I am, and as such am employed according to the plain direction of his word, as I have opportunity, doing good to all men. And his providence clearly concurs with his word; which has disengaged me from all things else, that I might singly attend on this very thing, and go about doing good.”—We have here a specimen of the manner in which Mr. Wesley reasoned, to satisfy himself that his conduct was justifiable before God and man. His arguments are taken from the obligation laid upon him to preach the gospel, the necessity of his situation, and the success of his labors. It is evident through the whole of his history, that, in addition to the two first considerations, the success of his labors in diffusing knowledge among the people, and in reforming their manners, bore down all objections in his own mind, against the irregularity of his proceedings.

About the middle of August, Mr. Wesley had a conversation with the Bishop of Bristol, on justification by faith alone; a part of which has been preserved.

*Bishop.* "Why, sir, our faith itself is a good work, it is a virtuous temper of mind."

*Wesley.* "My lord, whatever faith is, our church asserts, we are justified by faith alone. But how it can be called a good work, I see not: it is the gift of God; and a gift that presupposes nothing in us, but sin and misery."

*B.* "How, sir! Then you make God a tyrannical Being, if he justifies some without any goodness in them preceding, and does not justify all. If these are not justified on account of some moral goodness in them, why are not those justified too?"

*W.* "Because, my lord, they resist his Spirit; because they will not come to him that they may have life; because they suffer him not, to work in them both to will and to do. They cannot be saved, because they will not believe."

*B.* "Sir, what do you mean by faith?"

*W.* "My lord; by justifying faith I mean, a conviction wrought in a man by the Holy Ghost, that Christ hath loved *him*, and given himself for *him*, and that through Christ, *his* sins are forgiven."

*B.* "I believe some good men have this, but not all. But how do you prove this to be the justifying faith taught by our church?"

*W.* "My lord, from her Homily on Salvation, where she describes it thus; '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 favor of God.'"

*B.* "Why, sir, this is quite another thing."

*W.* "My lord, I conceive it to be the very same."

*B.* "Mr. Wesley, I will deal plainly with you. I once thought you, and Mr. Whitefield, well-meaning men; but I cannot think so now. For I have heard more of you: matters of fact, sir. And Mr. Whitefield says in his Journal, 'There are promises still to be fulfilled in me.' Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost, is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing!"

*W.* "My lord, for what Mr. Whitefield says, Mr. Whitefield, and not I, is accountable. I pretend to no extraordinary revelations, or gifts of the Holy Ghost: none but what every Christian may receive, and ought to expect and pray for. But I do not wonder your lordship has heard facts asserted, which if true, would prove the contrary; nor do I wonder, that your lordship, believing them true, should alter the opinion you once had of me. A quarter of an hour I spent with your lordship before, and about an hour now: and perhaps you have never conversed one other hour with any one who spake in my favor. But how many with those who spake on the other side! so that your lordship could not but think as you do.—But pray, my lord, what are those facts you have heard?"

*B.* "I hear you administer the sacrament in your societies."

*W.* "My lord, I never did yet, and I believe never shall."

B. "I hear too, many people fall into fits in your societies, and that you pray over them."

W. "I do so, my lord, when any show by strong cries and tears, that their soul is in deep anguish; I frequently pray to God, to deliver them from it, and our prayer is often heard in that hour."

B. "Very extraordinary indeed! Well, sir, since you ask my advice, I will give it you very freely. You have no business here. You are not commissioned to preach in this diocese. Therefore, I advise you to go hence."

W. "My lord, my business on earth is to do what good I can. Wherever therefore, I think I can do most good, there must I stay, so long as I think so. At present I think I can do most good here; therefore, here I stay.

"As to my preaching here, a dispensation of the gospel is committed to me, and woe is me if I preach not the gospel, wherever I am in the habitable world. Your lordship knows, being ordained a priest, by the commission I then received, I am a priest of the church universal: and being ordained as Fellow of a college, I was not limited to any particular cure, but have an indeterminate commission to preach the word of God, in any part of the Church of England. I do not therefore conceive, that in preaching here by this commission, I break any human law. When I am convinced I do, then it will be time to ask, 'Shall I obey God or man?' But if I should be convinced in the mean while, that I could advance the glory of God, and the salvation of souls in any other place more than in Bristol; in that hour, by God's help, I will go hence; which till then I may not do."

Methodism now began to make a rapid progress: societies were formed, not only in London and Bristol, but in many adjacent places; and some even at a considerable distance. The laborers as yet were few, but believing they were engaged in the cause of God against ignorance and profaneness which overspread the land, they were indefatigable, scarcely giving themselves any rest day or night. The effects of their preaching made much noise, which at length roused some of the sleeping watchmen of Israel; not indeed to inquire after the truth, and amend their ways, but to crush these irregular proceedings, that they might quietly sleep again. These opponents, however, had more zeal against Methodism, than knowledge of it. They attacked it with nothing but idle stories, misrepresentations of facts, and gross falsehoods. They retailed these from the pulpits, and published them from the press, with little regard to *moderation*, *charity*, or even *decency*. This brought more disgrace upon themselves, than on the Methodists; who finding they were assailed only with such kind of weapons, conceived a higher opinion of the cause in which they were engaged, and profited by the attack. A pious and moderate clergyman, perceiving that such attacks could do no good to their cause, published a few rules to direct the assailants in

their future attempts to stop the increasing innovations, in a discourse concerning enthusiasm, or religious delusion. "A minister of our church," says he, "who may look upon it as his duty to warn his parishioners, or an author who may think it necessary to caution his readers, against such preachers, or their doctrine (that is, enthusiastic preachers, such as he took the Methodist preachers to be) ought to be very careful to act with a christian spirit, and to advance nothing but with temper, charity, and truth.—Perhaps the following rules may be proper to be observed by them.

"1. Not to blame persons for doing that now, which Scripture records *holy men* of old to have practised; lest had they lived in those times they should have condemned them also.

"2. Not to censure men in *holy orders*, for teaching the same doctrines which are taught in the Scriptures, and by our church; lest they should ignorantly censure, what they profess to defend.

"3. Not to censure any professed members of our church, who live good lives, for resorting to religious assemblies in private houses, to perform in society acts of divine worship; when the same seems to have been practised by the primitive Christians; and when alas! there are so many parishes, where a person piously disposed, has no opportunity of joining in the public service of our church, more than one hour and half in a week.

"4. Not to condemn those who are constant attendants on the communion and service of our church, if they sometimes use other prayers in private assemblies; since the best divines of our church have composed and published many prayers, that have not the sanction of public authority; which implies a general consent, that our church has not made provision for every private occasion.

"5. Not to establish the power of working miracles, as the great criterion of a divine mission; when Scripture teaches us, that the agreement of doctrines with truth, as taught in those Scriptures, is the only infallible rule.

"6. Not to drive any away from our church, by opprobriously calling them dissenters, or treating them as such, so long as they keep to her communion.

"7. Not lightly to take up with silly stories that may be propagated, to the discredit of persons of a general good character.

"I do not lay down," says he, "these negative rules so much for the sake of any persons whom the unobservance of them would immediately injure, as for our church and her professed defenders. For churchmen, however well-meaning, would lay themselves open to censure, and might do her irretrievable damage, by a behavior contrary to them."

Mr. Wesley often wished that they, who either preached or wrote against him, would seriously attend to these rules; but these rules were too candid and liberal for the common herd of opposers. Some

attacked him with arguments, wretchedly misapplied; others with ridicule, as the more easy method. Among the latter were some even of his own family. His eldest sister Emelia, had always been accustomed to correspond with him, and being some years older than he, and of a strong understanding, had taken great liberty in expressing approbation or disapprobation of any part of his conduct. She wrote to him about this time in very ill temper, abused the Methodists as bad people, and told him she understood he could work miracles, cast out devils, &c. that she had the devil of poverty in her pocket, and should be much obliged if he would cast him out.—Mr. Wesley knew in whom he had believed, and in the midst of abuse poured out upon him by friends and enemies, went on his way as if he heard not.

After a short visit to London he again returned to Bristol. October 15. Upon a pressing invitation he set out for Wales. The churches were here also shut against him, as in England, and he preached in private houses, or in the open air to a willing people.—“I have seen,” says he, “no part of England so pleasant for sixty or seventy miles together, as those parts of Wales I have been in: and most of the inhabitants are indeed *ripe for the gospel*. I mean, if the expression seems strange, they are *earnestly desirous* of being instructed in it; and as *utterly ignorant* of it they are, as any Creek or Cherokee Indians. I do not mean, they are ignorant of the name of Christ: many of them can say both the Lord’s-prayer, and the Belief. Nay and some, all the catechism: but take them out of the road of what they have learned by rote, and they know no more (nine in ten of those with whom I conversed) either of gospel salvation, or of that faith whereby alone we can be saved, than *Chicali* or *Tomo Chachi*. Now what spirit is he of, who had rather these poor creatures should perish for lack of knowledge, than that they should be saved, even by the exhortations of Howell Harris, or an itinerant preacher. The word did not fall to the ground. Many repented and believed the gospel.—And some joined together, to strengthen each other’s hands in God, and to provoke one another to love and to good works.”

November 3. Mr. Wesley came to London, where the society was greatly divided, by means of some new notions the Moravian preachers had introduced among them, concerning degrees of faith, and the use of the ordinances, as means of grace. On the 9th, he tells us, “All this week I endeavored by private conversation, to comfort the feeble-minded, and to bring back the lame which had been turned out of the way, that at length they might be healed.—Sunday, November 11. I preached at eight, to five or six thousand, on the spirit of bondage and the spirit of adoption: and at five in the evening to seven or eight thousand, in the place which had been the King’s Foundery for cannon. O hasten thou the time, when nation shall not rise up against nation, neither shall they know war any more.”—This is the first time I find any mention of the Foundery, and several months



before Mr. Wesley has mentioned it, in his printed Journal. It seems as if he had taken it without consulting the society in Fetter-Lane, the majority of which were now alienated from him; and as a preparatory step to a final separation from the Moravian brethren.

Monday the 12th, he left London, without putting an end to the disputes among the people, over whom the rules of the society gave him no authority, and he had, at present, but little influence. In the evening he came to Wycombe, where there was a little society; to whom he explained the parable of the pharisee and publican. "Here," says he, "we unexpectedly found Mr. Robson and Gambold: with whom, after much prayer and consultation, we agreed, 1. To meet yearly at London, if God permit, on the eve of Ascension-day. 2. To fix then, the business to be done the ensuing year: where, when, and by whom? 3. To meet quarterly there, as many as can; viz. on the second Tuesday in July, October, and January. 4. To send a monthly account to one another, of what God hath done in each of our stations. 5. To inquire whether Mr. Hall, Sympson, Rogers, Ingham, Hutchins, Kinchin, Stonehouse, Cenick, Oxlee, and Brown, will join with us herein. 6. To consider, whether there be any others of our spiritual friends, who are able and willing so to do."—Here we have the first outlines of a plan to unite the ministers together, and to extend their labors to different parts of the kingdom, under such regulations as might give them a mutual dependence on one another. In this sketch, no one assumes an authority over the rest of his brethren: all appear equal. But this plan was never put into execution. When Mr. Wesley separated from the Moravian brethren, Mr. Gambold, and some others, gradually withdrew themselves from him.

November 6. Mr. Samuel Wesley died at Tiverton, and on the 15th, John and Charles Wesley set out on a visit to their sister, in her distress. They came to Tiverton on the 21st, and the Saturday following accepted an invitation to Exeter, where a Mr. D— the next day desired the use of the pulpit in St. Mary's church; which was readily granted both for the morning and afternoon. Mr. John Wesley preached on, "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." After sermon, Dr. W— told him, "Sir, you must not preach in the afternoon. Not," said he, "that you preach any false doctrine. I allow, all that you have said is true. And it is the doctrine of the Church of England. But it is not *guarded*. It is dangerous. It may lead people into *enthusiasm*, or *despair*."—How is this! So far as I can understand it, I think it is more inconsistent with reason, than any thing Mr. Wesley ever said in his life. Is it possible, that a knowledge of the truth, especially of the truths of the gospel, and of the doctrines of the Church of England, can have a tendency, without some special *guard*, to lead people into *enthusiasm*, or *despair*? And is it possible, that one who is set for the defence of the gospel and of the church, can

assert this? *Enthusiasm*, as the word is commonly used, is so vague a term, that I will not inquire what idea the doctor affixed to it; or whether he introduced it merely for the sound? By *despair*, I suppose he meant a state of mind consequent on *repentance* of past transgressions of the law of God. But can the truths of the gospel, or the doctrines of the church, have any moral influence on the minds of men, without producing in the first instance this sort of repentance? Or, do they leave men to *despair*, when brought to repent of their sins? Certainly, he who maintains this, is ignorant of the gospel; and instead of propagating it, or defending the church, is, in flat opposition to both, defending the reign of ignorance and sin over the minds of the people.

Mr. D—having requested a short account of what had been done in Kingswood, and of the building intended for a school; Mr. Wesley, on his return from Exeter, wrote to him as follows:

“Few persons have lived long in the West of England, who have not heard of the Colliers of Kingswood, a people famous from the beginning hitherto, for neither fearing God nor regarding man: so ignorant of the things of God, that they seemed but one remove from beasts that perish; and therefore utterly without the desire of instruction, as well as without the means of it.

“Many last winter used tauntingly to say of Mr. Whitefield, *If he will convert heathens*, why does not he go to the Colliers of Kingswood? In the spring he did so. And as there were thousands who resorted to no place of public worship, he went after them into their own wilderness, to seek and save that which was lost. When he was called away, others went into the highways and hedges, to compel them to come in. And by the grace of God, their labor was not in vain. The scene is already changed. Kingswood does not now, as a year ago, resound with cursing and blasphemy. It is no more filled with drunkenness and uncleanness, and the idle diversions that naturally lead thereto. It is no longer full of wars and fightings, of clamor and bitterness, of wrath and envyings. Peace and love are there. Great numbers of the people are mild, gentle, and easy to be entreated. They do not cry, neither strive, and hardly is their voice heard in the streets, or indeed in their own wood; unless when they are at their usual evening diversion, singing praise unto God their Saviour.

“That their children too might know the things which make for their peace, it was some time since proposed to build a house in Kingswood; and after many foreseen and unforeseen difficulties, in June last, the foundation was laid. The ground made choice of was in the middle of the wood, between the London and Bath roads, not far from that called Two-mile Hill, about three measured miles from Bristol.

“Here a large room was begun for the school, having four small

rooms at either end, for the school-masters (and perhaps, if it should please God, some poor children) to lodge in. Two persons are ready to teach, as soon as the house is ready to receive them, the shell of which is nearly finished; so that it is hoped the whole will be completed in spring, or early in the summer.

“It is true, although the masters require no pay, yet this undertaking is attended with great expense. But let him that feedeth the young ravens see to that. He hath the hearts of all men in his hand. If he put it into your heart, or into that of any of your friends, to assist in bringing this work to perfection, in this world look for no recompense; but it shall be remembered in that day when our Lord shall say, ‘Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.’”

Before the Methodists began to preach in Kingswood, the Colliers were a terror to the whole country round. But the change produced by their preaching, was so great and sudden, as to excite universal attention and admiration. And such was the state of religion and morality at this time throughout the nation, that, among a vast majority of the people, a similar change in their tempers and principles of action, was not less necessary to make them Christians, though the necessity of it might be less apparent. And what was done in Kingswood shows what might have been done every where, had the ministers of the gospel been such men as their office required them to be, and applied themselves to the duties of it with the same diligence, that men are obliged to use in following their temporal affairs; which certainly is the least that is required of a minister of the gospel. How will they meet Jesus Christ without shame, confusion, and conscious guilt, who have filled the sacred office of instructing the people in the way of salvation, and have suffered them to *perish for lack of knowledge*? The time will come when such men, of whatever denomination among Christians, will be fully convinced, it had been better for them to have been common porters, than to have occupied the highest pastoral offices in the church of God!

April, 1740. The rioters in Bristol, who had long disturbed the Methodists, being emboldened by impunity, were so increased as to fill, not only the court, but a considerable part of the street. The mayor sent them an order to disperse: but they set him at defiance. At length he sent several of his officers, who took the ringleaders into custody. The next day they were brought into court, it being the time of the quarter-sessions. There they received a severe reprimand, and the Methodists were molested no more.

Disputes still continued in the society at Fetter-Lane. Mr. Wesley had been in London several times without being able to put an end to them: and a great majority of the society were more and more estranged from him. He again came to London in the beginning of June, and labored with them till the 20th of July; when, finding it

was to no purpose, he read a paper, the substance of which was as follows :

“ About nine months ago, certain of you began to speak contrary to the doctrine we had till then received. The sum of what you asserted is this : 1. That there is no such thing as *weak faith* : that there is no justifying faith, where there is ever any doubt or fear ; or where there is not, in the full sense, a new, a clean heart. 2. That a man ought not to use those *ordinances* of God, which our church terms *means of grace*, before he has such a faith as excludes all doubt and fear, and implies a new, a clean heart. 3. You have often affirmed, that *to search the Scriptures, to pray, or to communicate*, before we have this faith, is *to seek salvation by works* ; and till these works are laid aside, no man can receive faith.

“ I believe these assertions to be flatly contrary to the word of God. I have warned you hereof again and again, and besought you to turn back to the law and to the testimony. I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn. But as I find you more and more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains, but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same judgment follow me.”—“ I then,” adds Mr. Wesley, “ without saying anything more, withdrew, as did eighteen or nineteen of the society.”

July 23. “ Our little company met at the Foundery, instead of Fetter-Lane. About twenty-five of our brethren God hath given us already, all of whom think and speak the same thing ; seven or eight and forty likewise, of the fifty women that were in band, desired to cast in their lot with us.”

We here see Mr. Wesley separating himself from the Moravian brethren, by whom he had been instructed in the gospel method of attaining present salvation. The controversy was about the ordinances, as means of grace, &c. He thought the majority in an error, saw they were daily making proselytes, and that the dispute itself was eating out the good which had been done among them. He therefore thought it no schism, or breach of charity to depart from them, and divide the society, as a means of preserving the rest.—But Mr. Wesley did not charge the whole body of the Moravians, with the notions above mentioned, but Molther in particular, who had occasioned the disputes. Peter Bohler, however, many years after, in a private letter, denied that Molther ever held the opinions Mr. Wesley attributed to him, and insisted that he must either have misunderstood, or misrepresented him. But it is not probable that Mr. Wesley either misunderstood or misrepresented him, as Mr. Charles Wesley mentions the same things in his private Journal. It is more likely that Molther was convinced of his error before he returned to Germany.

Mr. Wesley still retained a love for the brethren, which he expressed in an address to the Moravian church, prefixed to the Jour-

nal, in which the difference mentioned above is detailed at length. In this address he tells them, "What unites my heart to you is, the excellency, in many respects, of the doctrine taught among you: your laying the true foundation, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself;' your declaring the free grace of God, the cause, and faith the condition of justification: your bearing witness to those great fruits of faith, 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;' and that sure mark thereof, 'He that is born of God doth not commit sin.'

"I magnify the grace of God which is in many among you, enabling you to love him who hath first loved us; teaching you, in whatsoever state you are, therewith to be content: causing you to trample under foot the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life: and above all, giving you to love one another, in a manner the world knoweth not of.

"I love and esteem you for your excellent discipline, scarce inferior to that of the apostolic age: for your due subordination of officers, every one knowing and keeping his proper rank; for the exact division of the people under your charge, so that each may be fed with food convenient for them; for your care that all who are employed in the service of the church, should frequently and freely confer together; and, in consequence thereof, your exact and seasonable knowledge of the state of every member, and your ready distribution either of spiritual or temporal relief, as every man hath need."

Hitherto Mr. Whitefield had labored in union and harmony with Mr. Wesley, and his brother. They preached in the same pulpits, and had only one common design, to promote Christian knowledge, and a holy conversation among the people, without entering into the discussion of particular opinions. But about this time Mr. Wesley printed a sermon against the Calvinistic notion of predestination, and sent a copy to Commissary Garden, at Charlestown, where Mr. Whitefield met with it. He had already embraced that opinion; and though the subject was treated in that sermon, in a general way, without naming or pointing at any individual, yet he found himself hurt, that Mr. Wesley should bring forward the controversy, and publicly oppose an opinion which he believed to be agreeable to the word of God. On his passage to England, he wrote to Mr. Charles Wesley, February 1, 1741, expostulating with him and his brother on the subject. He says, "My dear, dear brethren, why did you throw out the bone of contention? Why did you print that sermon against predestination? Why did you in particular, my dear brother Charles, affix your hymn, and join in putting out your late hymn-book? How can you say, you will not dispute with me about election, and yet print such hymns, and your brother send his sermon over against election, to Mr. Garden, and others in America?—Do not you think, my dear brethren, I must be as much concerned

for truth, or what I think truth, as you? God is my judge, I always was, and hope I always shall be desirous that you may be preferred before me. But I must preach the gospel of Christ, and that I cannot *now* do, without speaking of election."—He then tells Mr. Charles, that in Christmas-week he had written an answer to his brother's sermon, "Which," says he, "is now printing at Charlestown; another copy I have sent to Boston, and another I now bring with me, to print in London. If it occasion a strangeness between us, it shall not be my fault. There is nothing in my answer exciting to it, that I know of. O my dear brethren, my heart almost bleeds within me! Methinks I could be willing to tarry here on the waters forever, rather than come to England to oppose you."

Controversy between good men is commonly on some speculative opinion, while they are perfectly at unison on the essential *points* of religion, and the duties of morality. And the controversy almost always injures the Christian temper, much more than it promotes the interests of speculative truth. On this occasion a separation took place between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield, so far as to have different places of worship: and some warm and tart expressions dropped from each. But their good opinion of each other's integrity and usefulness, founded on long and intimate acquaintance, could not be injured by such a difference of sentiment; and their mutual affection was only obscured by a cloud, for a season.

Mr. Whitefield was the first who visited the Colliers of Kingswood, and formed the design of building the school there; and began to make collections for the purpose. But his calls to America, would not permit him to prosecute the design, which he therefore transferred to Mr. Wesley. Being now less friendly than before, he was more disposed to find fault with little things, and to misconstrue the bare appearances of others. He wrote a list of things he thought improperly managed. In April Mr. Wesley returned him a long answer, part of which is as follows:

"Would you have me deal plainly with you, my brother? I believe you would: then by the grace of God I will.

"Of many things I find you are not rightly informed: of others you speak what you have not well weighed.

"The society-room at Bristol, you say is adorned. How? Why with a piece of green cloth nailed to the desk; two sconces for eight candles each in the middle; and—nay I know no more. Now which of these can be spared, I know not; nor would I desire either more adorning or less.

"But lodgings are made for me or my brother. That is, in plain English, there is a little room by the school, where I speak to the persons who come to me; and a garret, in which a bed is placed for me. And do you grudge me this? Is this the voice of my brother, my son Whitefield!

“ You say further, that the children at Bristol, are clothed as well as taught. I am sorry for it; for the cloth is not paid for yet, and was bought without my consent or knowledge.

“ But those of Kingswood have been neglected. This is not so, notwithstanding the heavy debt which lay upon it. One master and one mistress have been in the house, ever since it was capable of receiving them. A second master has been placed there some months since: and I have long been seeking for two proper mistresses; so that as much has been done, as matters stand, if not more, than I can answer to God or man.

“ Hitherto then, there is no ground for the heavy charge of perverting your design for the poor colliers. Two years since your design was to build them a school, that their children also might be taught to fear the Lord. To this end you collected some money, more than once: how much I cannot say, till I have my papers. But this I know; it was not near one-half of what has been expended on the work. This design you then recommended to me, and I pursued it with all my might, through such a train of difficulties as, I will be bold to say, you have not yet met with in your life. For many months I collected money wherever I was—and began building, though I had not then a quarter of the money requisite to finish. However, taking all the debt upon myself, the creditors were willing to stay: and then it was that I took possession of it in my own name; that is when the foundation was laid; and I immediately made my will, fixing my brother and you to succeed me therein.

“ But it is a poor case, that you and I should be talking thus. Indeed these things ought not to be. It lay in your power to have prevented all, and yet to have borne testimony to what you call the truth. If you had disliked my sermon, you might have printed another on the same text, and have answered my proofs, without mentioning my name: this had been fair and friendly.

“ You rank all the maintainers of *universal redemption*, with Socinians themselves. Alas, my brother, do you not know even this, that the Socinians allow no redemption at all? That Socinus himself speaks thus, *Tota redemptio nostra per Christum, metaphora?* And says expressly, ‘ Christ did not die as a ransom for any, but only as an example for all mankind!’ How easy were it for me to hit many other palpable blots, in that which you call an answer to my sermon? And how above measure contemptible would you then appear to all impartial men, either of sense or learning? But I spare you, mine hand shall not be upon you; the Lord be judge between me and thee! The general tenor both of my public and private exhortations, when I touch thereon at all, as even my enemies know if they would testify, is, spare the young man, even Absalom, for my sake.”

Perhaps Mr. Wesley, in consequence of his age and learning, assumed in this letter, a greater superiority over Mr. Whitefield, than

was prudent or becoming. It was not possible, however, that the dust of controversy could long smother the ardent affection which each had for the other. In the latter end of the following year, Mr. Whitefield wrote to him as follows: "I long to hear from you, and write this hoping to have an answer. I rejoice to hear the Lord blesses your labors.—May you be blessed in bringing souls to Christ, more and more. I believe we shall go on best when we only preach the simple gospel, and do not interfere with each other's plan.—Our Lord exceedingly blesses us at the Tabernacle.—I doubt not but he deals in the same bountiful manner with you. I was at your letter-day on Monday. Brother Charles has been pleased to come and see me twice. Behold what a happy thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! That the whole christian world may all become of one heart and one mind; and that we in particular, though differing in judgment, may be examples of mutual, fervent, undissembled affection, is the hearty prayer of, Rev. and dear sir, your most affectionate, though most unworthy younger brother in the kingdom and patience of Jesus."

I have not found Mr. Wesley's answer to this letter; but it appears from one Mr. Whitefield wrote to him about a fortnight after, that he had answered it, in the same spirit of peace and brotherly love. "I thank you," says Mr. Whitefield, "for your kind answer to my last. Had it come a few hours sooner I should have read some part of it amongst our other letters. Dear sir, who would be troubled with a party spirit? May our Lord make all his children free from it indeed!"

From this time, their mutual regard and friendly intercourse suffered no interruption till Mr. Whitefield's death; who says, in his last Will, written with his own hand about six months before he died, "I leave a mourning-ring to my honored and dear friends, and disinterested fellow-laborers, the Rev. Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, in token of my indissoluble union with them, in heart and christian affection, notwithstanding our difference in judgment about some particular points of doctrine."\* When the news of Mr. Whitefield's death reached London, Mr. Keen, one of his executors, recollecting he had often said to him, "If you should die abroad whom shall we get to preach your funeral sermon? Must it be your old friend, the Rev. Mr. John Wesley?" And having constantly received for answer, "He is the man;" Mr. Keen accordingly waited on Mr. Wesley, and engaged him to preach it; which he did, and bore ample testimony to the undissembled piety, the ardent zeal, and the extensive usefulness of his much loved and honored friend.†

After Mr. Wesley had separated from the Moravians, Mr. Gambold and some others left him, and became more closely united to the *brethren*: and even his brother Charles was at this time wavering. On this occasion Mr. Wesley sent him the following letter, dated

\* See Robert's Life of Whitefield, page 256.

† Ibid. page 230. Mr. Whitefield died in September, 1770.



London, April 21. "I am settling," says he, "the regular method of visiting the sick here; eight or ten have offered themselves for the work; who are likely to have full employment; for more and more are taken ill every day. Our Lord will thoroughly purge his floor.

"I rejoice in your speaking your mind freely. O let our love be without dissimulation. I am not clear, that brother Maxfield should not expound at Greyhound-lane; nor can I as yet do without him. Our clergymen have increased full as much as the laymen; and that the Moravians are other than laymen, I know not.

"As yet I dare in no wise join with the Moravians: 1. Because their whole scheme is *mystical*, not *scriptural*, refined in every point above what is written, immeasurably beyond the plain doctrines of the gospel. 2. Because there is darkness and closeness in all their behavior, and guile in almost all their words. 3. Because they not only do not practise, but utterly despise and deny self-denial and the daily cross. 4. Because they, upon principle, conform to the world, in wearing gold or costly apparel. 5. Because they extend christian liberty in this and many other respects, beyond what is warranted by holy writ. 6. Because they are by no means zealous of good works; or at least, only to their own people. And lastly, because they make inward religion swallow up outward in general. For these reasons chiefly I will rather, God being my helper, stand quite alone than join with them. I mean, till I have full assurance that they will spread none of these errors among the little flock committed to my charge.

"O! my brother, my soul is grieved for you: the poison is in you: fair words have stolen away your heart.—No English man or woman, is like the Moravians! So the matter is come to a fair issue. Five of us did still stand together a few months since: but two are gone to the right hand (Hutchins and Cennick) and two more to the left (Mr. Hall, and you;) Lord, if it be thy gospel which I preach, arise and maintain thine own cause!"

Mr. Maxfield was a layman, and hence we see laymen were already employed by Mr. Wesley in the work. He was remarkably useful, and excited the astonishment of those who heard him. The late Countess Dowager of Huntingdon, was at this time, and for many years after, exceedingly attached to Mr. Wesley, and very frequently wrote to him. She heard Mr. Maxfield expound and in a letter to Mr. Wesley speaks thus of him. "I never mentioned to you, that I have seen Maxfield. He is one of the greatest instances of God's peculiar favor, that I know. He has raised from the stones, one to sit among the princes of his people. He is my astonishment. How is God's power shown in weakness. You can have no idea, what an attachment I have to him. He is highly favored of the Lord. The first time I made him expound, expecting little from him, I sat over against him, and thought, what a power of God must be with him, to make me give any attention to him. But before he had gone over one fifth

part, any one that had seen me would have thought I had been made of wood or stone, so quite immovable I both felt and looked. His power in prayer is very extraordinary.—To deal plainly, I could either talk or write for an hour about him.—The society goes on well here.—Live assured of the most faithful and sincere friendship of your unworthy sister in Christ Jesus.”

From this time the number of laymen employed, gradually increased, in proportion to the increase of the societies and the want of preachers; the clergy generally standing at a distance from a plan of such irregularity, and so much labor. The objections that have been made against employing lay-preachers, and what may be fairly said in their defence, will be considered in another part of this work.

In June, Mr. Wesley took a journey as far as Nottingham, where he preached, at the market-place, to an immense multitude of people.—He set out for London, and read over in the way Luther's Comment on the Epistle to the Galatians. He passes a most severe sentence on Luther, for decrying Reason, right or wrong, as an enemy to the gospel of Christ; and for speaking *blasphemously* of good works, and the law of God. The severity of this sentence perhaps arose from a misconception of the scope and design of Luther's words. That Luther sometimes spake incautiously, and even rashly, we may readily admit, and that his words, on such occasions may be easily understood in a sense he did not intend; which was probably the case in the passages to which Mr. Wesley refers. But some allowance is to be made for Luther's\* situation, the errors he had to oppose, and the

\* Martin Luther, the celebrated German reformer, was born in Saxony, in 1483. He studied at Erford, being designed for a civilian. But an awful catastrophe made such an impression on his mind, that he resolved to retire from the world. As he was walking in the fields with a fellow student, they were struck by lightning, Luther to the ground, and his companion dead by his side. He then entered into the order of Augustine hermits at Erford. From this place he removed to Wirtemberg, being appointed by the Elector of Saxony, professor of Theology and Philosophy in the university just founded there by that prince. In 1512, he was sent to Rome, to plead the cause of some convents of his order, who had quarrelled with their vicar-general: this gave him an opportunity of observing the corruptions of the pontifical court, and the debauched lives of the dignitaries of the church; and probably gave him the first disgust of the Romish ecclesiastical government; especially as he had engaged in the monastic life from motives of genuine piety. Upon his return to Wirtemberg, it was remarked that he grew unusually pensive, and more austere in his life and conversation: he likewise read and expounded the sacred writings in lectures and sermons; and threw new lights on obscure passages. The minds of his auditors being thus prepared, a favorable occasion soon offered for carrying into execution his grand plan of reform. In 1517, Pope Leo X. published his indulgencies. Albert, archbishop of Mentz, and Magdeburgh, was commissioner for Germany, and was to have half the sum raised in that country: Tetzal, a Dominican friar, was deputed to collect, with others of his order, for Saxony; and he carried his zeal so far, as to declare his commission was so extensive, that by purchasing indulgencies, not only all past sins, but those intended in future, were to be forgiven. Luther beheld his success with great concern, and began to preach openly against such vile practices. And thus began the Reformation in Germany, which Luther carried on with astonishing success, through a train of difficulties and dangers, that, to human reason appeared insuperable. He died in 1546, aged 63. Luther's friends and adherents were first called Protestants, in

provocations he received. He must be more than human, who can walk steadily in the middle path of moderation, while a host of enemies are pushing and goading him on every side.

June 18. Being at Oxford, Mr. Wesley inquired concerning the exercises previous to the degree of *Batchelor in Divinity*. And though he certainly was well qualified to pass through the various gradations of academical honors, yet he laid aside the thought of proceeding further in them.—Having visited London, he was again at Oxford in the beginning of July; and on the sixth being in the college-library, “I took down,” says he, “by mistake, the works of *Episcopius*;\* which, opening on an account of the Synod of Dort, I believed it might be useful to read it through. But what a scene is here disclosed! What a pity it is that the *holy* Synod of Trent, and that of Dort, did not sit at the same time! Nearly allied as they were, not only as to the *purity of doctrine*, which each of them established, but also as to the *spirit* wherewith they acted! If the latter did not exceed.”

July 15. Mr. Wesley reached Bristol, and tells us he came just in

1529, at a Diet held at Spire, in which several Princes of the Empire, and some Imperial cities *protested* against the attempts of the Romanists to obtain a decree, that no change should be made in their religion. The Calvinists have commonly been called the Reformed churches.

\* Simon Episcopius, was born at Amsterdam, in 1583. He was one of the most learned men of the 17th century, and chief supporter of the Arminian doctrine. In 1612, he was chosen divinity professor at Leyden, in the midst of the Arminian controversy; which, though it had begun in the Universities, soon flew to the pulpits, from whence it spread and inflamed the people. In 1610, the year after Arminius died, his friends, who had espoused his doctrine, presented a Remonstrance to the States of Holland, against the violent proceedings of the Calvinists to injure or suppress them. And from this circumstance, they have since been called in Holland, Remonstrants. In 1617, the King of Great Britain exhorted the States General of the United Provinces to call a Synod to put an end to their differences. This advice was seconded by several of the States; and accordingly a Synod was appointed to be held the next year at Dort. The States of Holland having invited Episcopius to take his place in it, he went thither accompanied by some Remonstrant ministers; but the Synod would not allow them to sit as judges, nor to appear in any other capacity than as persons accused, and summoned before them. The Remonstrants were condemned, deposed from their functions, and banished their country! But the times growing more favorable, Episcopius returned to Holland, and at length was chosen Rector of the college founded by the Arminians, at Amsterdam; where he died in 1643.

Some of the foreign divines present at the Synod, afterwards complained, that the Remonstrants had been wronged; that they had been imposed upon, by the Moderator and his cabal, who formed a Synod among themselves, and concerted in *private* those things they had a mind to bring to a good issue.—It is evident that the Dutch divines were parties concerned, and judges on the trial. What justice or candor could their opponents expect? Synods, Assemblies, or Conferences, call them what you please, that are conducted on such principles as these, are hateful to God, and odious to candid and good men, who fully understand their proceedings.—What is the cause, that men of most denominations, who have been set apart to instruct others in our most holy religion, which teaches us humility, the love of God and man, and a forgiving spirit, should be so much alike, and so much *worse* than other people, when they have the power of persecuting and distressing those who oppose them, or differ from them in opinion? How highly ought we to esteem the true ministers of Christ, who shew a more Christian temper!

season; "For," says he, "a spirit of enthusiasm was breaking in upon many, who charged their own *imagination*s on the *will of God*, and that, not *written*, but *impressed on their hearts*. If these *impressions* be received as the rule of action, instead of the *written word*, I know nothing so wicked or absurd, but we may fall into, and that without remedy."—We have here full and satisfactory evidence, that Mr. Wesley paid no regard to impressions or inward feelings, if they did not accord with the written word, by which alone we must judge of them. His belief on this subject was plainly this; 1. Without experience of present salvation from our sins, the gospel has no saving influence on our hearts: 2. Such experience can have no existence without inward feeling, that is a consciousness of it: 3. That we must judge of the reality of our experience by the word of God, to which it will answer as face answers to face in a glass, if it be of God; otherwise it is mere imagination, a creature of our own that will deceive us.

The following queries concerning the Methodists were sent, I apprehend, from Holland or Germany to some person in England. The answer to each is in Mr. Wesley's hand-writing; and the date prefixed is 1741. But if this be the true date, I conjecture, from the answer to the fourth and fifth query, that it must have been very early in this year, before Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield separated on the doctrine of predestination. However, not being able to ascertain the date exactly, I have referred them to this place.

Quest. 1. Whether the number of the Methodists is considerable, among the students and learned men?

Ans. "The number of the Methodists is not considerable, among the students and learned men."

2. Whether at Oxford, where the Methodists first sprung up, there be still many of them among the scholars?

"There are very few of them now left, among the scholars at Oxford."

3. Whether they are all of one mind, and whether they have the same principles? Especially, 4. Whether those Methodists that are still at Oxford, approve of the sentiments and actions of Mr. Whitefield and Messrs. Wesleys?

"They are all of the same principles with the Church of England, as laid down in her Articles and Homilies: and, 4. Do accordingly approve of the sentiments of Mr. Whitefield, and Mr. Wesley, and of their publishing them elsewhere, since they have been shut out of the churches."

5. How they came to revive those doctrines, hitherto neglected by the clergy of the Church of England, of predestination, the new birth, and justification by faith alone? And 6. Whether they have the same from the Moravian brethren?

"Predestination is not a doctrine taught by the Methodists. But

they do teach that men must be born again, and that we are saved through faith: and 6. "The latter of these they learned from some of the Moravian brethren; the former by reading the New Testament."

7. Whether they be orthodox\* in other doctrinal points; and whether they lead an unblameable Christian life;

"They openly challenge all that hear them to answer those questions, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' Or, of teaching any doctrine contrary to the scripture? And the general accusation against them is, that they are righteous overmuch."

8. Whether they strictly regulate themselves according to the rule and discipline of the Moravian brethren; except that they still keep and observe the outward worship according to the Church of England?

"They do not regulate themselves according to the discipline of the Moravians but of the English Church."

9. Whether they do any real good among the common people?

"Very many of the common people among whom they preach, were profane swearers, and now fear an oath; were gluttons, or drunkards, and are now temperate; were whoremongers, and are now chaste; were servants of the devil, and are now servants of God."

10. Why the bishops do not effectually inhibit them, and hinder their field and street preaching?

"The bishops do not inhibit their field and street preaching; 1. Because there is no law in England against it: 2. Because God does not yet suffer them to do it without law."

11. Whether the Archbishop of Canterbury is satisfied with them; as we are told?

"The Archbishop of Canterbury is not satisfied with them; especially since Mr. Molther, in the name of the Moravian Church, told his Grace their disapprobation of them; and in particular of their field preaching."

12. Whether their private assemblies or societies are orderly and edifying?

"Their private assemblies, and societies are orderly, and many say they find them edifying."

13. What opinion the Presbyterians, and particularly Dr. Watts, has of them?

"Most of the Presbyterians, and most all other denominations, are of opinion, much religion hath made them mad."

14. Whether there are any Methodists among the episcopal clergy of the Church of England?

"Mr. Whitefield, Hutchins, Robson, and the two Messrs. Wesleys, and several others, are priests of the Episcopal Church of England."

\* Some persons have thought this word very equivocal, and difficult to be explained. A late celebrated public speaker among the Friends, once told his audience at Warrington, that he knew not how to explain the word orthodox, except by another little word of three syllables, *uppermost*! In this sense the Methodists have never yet been orthodox; and it is generally supposed there are but few among them who earnestly desire to be so.

The modesty and openness with which Mr. Wesley answered the queries, is striking and pleasing. His mind seems to have been wholly free from any desire to exaggerate or magnify the things of which he spake.

The laborers as yet being few, Mr. Wesley staid but a short time in any one place, being almost continually travelling between London, Bristol, and Wales; the last of which he visited twice in the autumn. In London, they had long been disturbed in their places of worship by a riotous mob; but on the last day of this year, Sir John Ganson called upon him, and said, "Sir, you have no need to suffer these riotous mobs to molest you, as they have done long. I, and all the other Middlesex magistrates have orders from above, to do you justice whenever you apply to us." Two or three weeks after they did apply. Justice was done, though not with rigor: and from that time the Methodists had peace in London.

Feb. 15, 1742. Many met together at Bristol, to consult with Mr. Wesley concerning a proper method of paying the public debt, contracted by building. Nearly three years before this period, a house had been built here, called the New Room; and notwithstanding the subscriptions and public collections made at the time to defray the expense, a large debt remained upon it. And it was now agreed, 1. That every member of the society who was able, should contribute a penny a week. 2. That the whole society should be divided into little companies or *classes*, about twelve in each class: and, 3. That one person in each class, should receive the contribution of the rest, and bring it to the stewards weekly. In March, the same thing was done in London, though for a different purpose. "I appointed," says Mr. Wesley, "several earnest and sensible men to meet me, to whom I showed the great difficulty I had long found, of knowing the people who desired to be under my care. After much discourse, they all agreed, there could be no better way to come to a sure, thorough knowledge of each person, than to divide them into classes like those at Bristol, under the inspection of those in whom I could most confide. This was the origin of our classes in London, for which I can never sufficiently praise God: the unspeakable usefulness of the institution, having ever since been more and more manifest."

The person appointed to visit and watch over these little companies, or classes, was called the *leader* of that class to which he received his appointment. Mr. Wesley called the leaders together, and desired that each would make a particular inquiry into the behavior of those he saw weekly. They did so; and many disorderly walkers were detected. Some were turned from the evil of their ways, and some put away from the society. The rest saw it with fear, and rejoiced unto God with reverence.—At first the leaders visited each person at his own house: but this was soon found inexpedient. It required

more time than the leaders had to spare; many persons lived with masters, mistresses, or relations, where they could not be so visited; and where misunderstandings had arisen between persons in the same class, it was more convenient to see them face to face. On these, and some other considerations, it was agreed that each leader should meet his class all together, once a week, at a time and place most convenient for the whole. He began and ended the meeting with singing and prayer; and spent about an hour in conversing with those present, one by one. By this means, a more full inquiry was made into the behavior of every person; advice or reproof was given as need required; misunderstandings were removed, and brotherly-love promoted. "It can scarce be conceived," says Mr. Wesley, "what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now experienced that christian fellowship, of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to bear one another's burdens, and naturally to care for each other's welfare. And as they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for each other." Mr. Wesley further adds, "Upon reflection, I could not but observe, this is the very thing which was from the beginning of Christianity. In the earliest times, those whom God had sent forth, preached the gospel to every creature. And the *οἱ ἀκροαταὶ*, the body of hearers, were mostly either Jews or Heathens. But as soon as any of these were so convinced of the truth, as to forsake sin, and seek the gospel of salvation, they immediately joined them together, took an account of their names, advised them to watch over each other, and met these *κατηχημένοι*, *catechumens*, as they were then called, apart from the great congregation, that they might instruct, rebuke, exhort, and pray with them, and for them, according to their several necessities."

As the people increased, and societies were multiplied, Mr. Wesley found it necessary to add some further regulations, to ascertain who belonged to the society, and to prevent improper persons from imposing upon him. To every person therefore, of whose seriousness, and good conversation he had no doubt, he gave a *ticket*, on which was printed a short portion of Scripture, and on which he wrote the date and the person's name. He who received a ticket was by that made a member of the society, and immediately appointed to meet in some one of the classes; and this method of admitting members was adopted throughout the whole Methodist connection. These tickets, therefore, or *Tesseræ*, as the ancients called them, being of the same force with the *επιστολαὶ συστατικαὶ*, commendatory letters, mentioned by the Apostle, introduced those who bore them, into the fellowship one with another, not only in one place, but in every place where any might happen to come. As they were common to all the members of the societies every where, so a stranger in any place, who held one, was immediately received as a brother, and admitted to their private

assemblies. But lest any improper person should be suffered to continue in the society, and bring disgrace on the whole body by bad conduct, it was agreed that these tickets should have no force for a longer time than three months. Mr. Wesley determined, that, where he could stay a few days, he would speak with every member of the society once a quarter, and change the tickets; and that the preachers appointed to act as his assistants, should every where do the same. By this means the tickets were changed four times in a year; and this was called *visiting the classes*. Mr. Wesley observes, "By these (tickets) it was easily distinguished, when the society were to meet apart, who were members of it, and who not. These also supplied us with a quiet and inoffensive method of removing any disorderly member, he has no new ticket at the next quarterly visitation, and hereby it is immediately known, that he is no longer of the community."

April 9. They had the first watch-night in London. "We commonly choose," says Mr. Wesley, "for this solemn service, the Friday night nearest the full moon, either before or after, that those of the congregation who live at a distance may have light to their several homes. The service begins at half an hour past eight, and continues till a little after midnight. We have often found a peculiar blessing at these seasons. There is generally a deep awe upon the congregation, perhaps in some measure owing to the silence of the night: particularly in singing the hymn, with which we commonly conclude:

"Hearken to the solemn voice!  
The awful midnight cry,  
Waiting souls rejoice, rejoice,  
And feel the Bridegroom nigh."

Having received a letter pressing him to go without delay into Leicestershire, he set out. "The next afternoon," says Mr. Wesley, "I stopt a little at Newport-Pagnell, and then rode on till I overtook a serious man, with whom I immediately fell into conversation. He presently gave me to know what his opinions were: therefore I said nothing to contradict them. But that did not content him: he was quite uneasy to know 'Whether I held the doctrine of the decrees, as he did.' But I told him over and over, we had better keep to practical things, lest we should be angry at one another. And so we did for two miles, till he caught me unawares, and dragged me into the dispute before I knew where I was. He then grew warmer and warmer: told me, I was rotten at heart, and supposed I was one of John Wesley's followers. I told him, no, I am John Wesley himself. Upon which he appeared,

*'Improvvisum aspris veluti qui sentibus anguem  
Pressit.'*"

As one who had unawares trodden on a snake: "and would gladly



have run away outright. But being the better mounted of the two, I kept close to his side, and endeavored to show him his heart, till we came into the street of Northampton."

Mr. Wesley had now a call to extend his labors further north than he had hitherto done. John Nelson, a mason of Birstal, in Yorkshire, had been in London some time, and heard the gospel at the Foundery. His understanding was informed, his conscience awakened, and feeling the whole energy of the truths he heard delivered, he received that peace, which the Apostle speaks of, as the fruit of justifying faith. He received 'the knowledge of salvation by the remission of his sins.' He had full employment and large wages in London, but he found a constant inclination to return to his native place. He did so; and his relations and acquaintance soon began to inquire what he thought of this new faith, which, by means of Mr. Ingham, had occasioned much noise and talk in Yorkshire. John told them point blank, this new faith, as they called it, was the old faith of the gospel: and related to them his own experience. This was soon noised abroad; and more and more came to inquire concerning these strange things. Some put him upon the proof of the great truths such inquiries naturally led him to mention. And thus he was brought unawares to quote, explain, compare, and enforce several parts of Scripture. This he did at first, sitting in his house, till the company increased so that the house could not contain them. Then he stood at the door, which he was commonly obliged to do, in the evening, as soon as he came from work. His word was soon made a blessing to the people: many believed his report, and were turned from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and satan unto the living God. Mr. Ingham hearing of this came to Birstal, inquired into the facts, talked with John himself in the closest manner, both touching his knowledge and experience. The result was, he encouraged him to proceed, and invited him to come, as often as convenient, to any of those places where he himself had been, and speak to the people as God should enable him. Things being in this state, John Nelson invited Mr. Wesley to come down amongst them; and May 26, he arrived at Birstal. Here he found a lay-preacher who undeniably, had done much good. Many of the greatest profligates in all the country were now changed. Their blasphemies were turned to praise. The whole town wore a new face: such a change did God work by the artless testimony of one plain man! Mr. Wesley was so fully convinced of the great design of a preached gospel, that if sinners were truly converted to God, and a decent order preserved in hearing the word, he thought it a matter of less consequence, whether the instrument of the good done, was a layman, or regularly ordained. And if a regularly ordained preacher did no good, and a layman by preaching did; it was easy to judge which was acting most agreeably to the design of the gospel, and most for the benefit of society.

It is probable that such reflections as these had arisen in his mind on the fact before him: and his judgment was confirmed by repeated facts of the same kind which occurred. And thus he was induced to make use of the labors of laymen, on a more extensive scale than had hitherto been allowed.

After preaching at Birstal, he went forward to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Having witnessed the success of the gospel among the colliers at Kingswood, he had long had a desire to visit those about Newcastle, and now accomplished his wish; at least in part, and made way for future visits. He was not known to any person in Newcastle; and therefore he, and John Taylor, who travelled with him, put up at an inn. On walking through the town, after taking some refreshment, he observes, "I was surprised: so much drunkenness, cursing and swearing, even from the mouths of little children, do I never remember to have seen and heard before in so short a time. Sunday, May 30. At seven in the morning, he walked down to Sandgate, the poorest and most contemptible part of the town, and standing at the end of the street with John Taylor, began to sing the hundredth psalm. "Three or four people," says he, "came out to see what was the matter, who soon increased to four or five hundred. I suppose there might be twelve or fifteen hundred before I had done preaching: to whom I applied those solemn words, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.'

"Observing the people when I had done, to stand gaping and staring upon me with the most profound astonishment, I told them, if you desire to know who I am, my name is John Wesley. At five in the evening, with God's help, I design to preach here again. At five, the hill on which I designed to preach, was covered from top to bottom. I never saw so large a number of people together, either in Moorfields, or at Kennington-common. I knew it was not possible for the one half to hear, although my voice was then strong and clear; and I stood so as to have them all in view, as they were ranged on the side of the hill. The word of God which I set before them was, 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.' After preaching, the poor people were ready to tread me under foot, out of pure love and kindness. I was sometime before I could possibly get out of the press. I then went back another way than I came. But several were got to our inn before me: by whom I was vehemently importuned to stay with them, at least a few days: or however, one day more. But I could not consent; having given my word to be at Birstal, with God's leave, on Tuesday night."

Monday, 31. Mr. Wesley left Newcastle, and preached at various places as he returned through Yorkshire. June 5. He rode for Epworth, in Lincolnshire, the place of his nativity. "It being many years," says he, "since I had been in Epworth before, I went to an

inn, in the middle of the town, not knowing whether there were any left in it now, who would not be ashamed of my acquaintance. But an old servant of my father, with two or three poor women, presently found me out. I asked her, 'Do you know any in Epworth who are in earnest to be saved?' She answered, 'I am by the grace of God; and I know I am saved through faith.' I asked, 'have you then peace with God? Do you know that he has forgiven your sins?' She replied, 'I thank God, I know it well, and many here can say the same thing.'"

Sunday, 6. A little before the service began, he offered his assistance to Mr. Romley, the curate, either by preaching or reading prayers. But this was not accepted. In the afternoon, the church was exceedingly full, a report being spread, that Mr. Wesley was to preach. After sermon, John Taylor stood in the church-yard, and gave notice, as the people came out, that Mr. Wesley, not being permitted to preach in the church, designed to preach there at six o'clock. "Accordingly at six," says he, "I came, and found such a congregation as, I believe, Epworth never saw before. I stood near the east end of the church, upon my father's tombstone, and cried, 'The kingdom of heaven is not meats and drinks; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'"

On the 9th, he tells us, "I rode over to a neighboring town, to wait upon a justice of peace, a man of candor and understanding; before whom, I was informed, their angry neighbors had carried a whole waggon-load of these new *heretics*. But when he asked 'what they had done?' There was a deep silence; for that was a point their conductors had forgot. At length one said, 'Why they pretend to be better than other people: and besides they pray from morning to night.' Mr. S. asked, 'But have they done nothing besides?' 'Yes, sir,' said an old man: 'an't please your worship, they have *converted* my wife. Till she went among them, she had such a tongue! And now she is as quiet as a lamb.' 'Carry them back, carry them back,' replied the justice, 'and let them convert all the scolds in the town.'"

On the 13th, Mr. Wesley preached for the last time at Epworth, during his present visit, and from thence went to Sheffield. Here he staid and preached a few days, and then went on to Donnington Park, and found Miss Cowper, whom he had called to see in his way to Yorkshire, was gone to rest. Here he conversed with Mr. Simpson, who had gone among the *brethren*. "And of this I am fully persuaded," says Mr. Wesley, "that whatever he does, is in the uprightness of his heart. But he is led into a thousand mistakes by one wrong principle; the making *inward impressions* his rule of action, and not the *written word*: which many ignorantly or wickedly ascribe to the body of the people called Methodists." Here we may observe, as in an instance before mentioned, Mr. Wesley wholly con-

demns the principle of making *inward impressions* the rule of conduct independent of, or separate from, the written word of God.

Mr. Wesley left Donnington Park, and preaching at various places in the way, on the 28th, came to Bristol. From hence he visited Wales, and afterwards divided his labors chiefly between London and Bristol, and some adjacent societies, till the beginning of November, when he set out for the North. On the 13th, he came to Newcastle. Here his brother Charles had been preaching some weeks before, with great success, and a society was already formed. The next morning Mr. Wesley began to preach at five o'clock, a thing unheard of in these parts, till he introduced the practice: which he did every where, if there was any probability that a few persons could be gathered to hear him. On the 18th, he says, "I could not but observe, the different manner wherein God is pleased to work in different places. The grace of God flows here, with a wider stream than it did at first either at Bristol or Kingswood. But it does not sink so deep as it did there. Few are thoroughly convinced of sin, and scarce any can witness that the Lamb of God has taken away their sins." I fear this judgment of the state of the people, was not founded on the most satisfactory evidence. His brother had been here, who did not encourage *agitations*: and he had hitherto seen less of them under his preaching, than he had been accustomed to see in other places. But however this may be, for I do not determine, he formed a different opinion some days after. "I never saw," says he, "a work of God in any other place, so evenly and gradually carried on. It continually rises step by step. Not so much seems to be done at any one time, as hath frequently been done at Bristol or London: but something at every time. It is the same with particular souls. I saw none in the triumph of faith, which has been so common in other places. But the believers go on calm and steady. Let God do as seemeth him good."

Dec. 20. Having obtained a piece of ground, forty yards in length, to build a house for their meetings and public worship, they laid the first stone of the building. It being computed, that such a house as was proposed, could not be finished under seven hundred pounds, many were positive it would never be finished at all. "I was of another mind," says Mr. Wesley, "nothing doubting, but as it was begun for God's sake, he would provide what was needful for the finishing of it." December 30. He took his leave for the present of Newcastle, and the towns where he preached in the neighborhood, and came as far as Darlington that night. "What encouragement," says he, "have we to speak for God! At our inn we met an ancient man, who seemed by his conversation, never to have thought whether he had a soul or not. Before we set out, I spoke a few words concerning his cursing and idle conversation. The man appeared quite broken in pieces. The tears started into his eyes; and he acknowl-

edged, with abundance of thanks, his own guilt, and the goodness of God."

In this year, many societies were formed in Somersetshire, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, and Nottinghamshire, as well as the southern parts of Yorkshire. And those in London, Bristol, and Kingswood, were much increased.

January 1, 1743. He reached Epworth; and the next day being Sunday, he preached at five in the morning; and again at eight, from his father's tomb-stone. "Many," says he, "from the neighboring towns, asked, if it would not be well, as it was sacrament-Sunday, for them to receive it? I told them, by all means; but it would be more respectful first to ask Mr. Romley, the curate's leave. One did so, in the name of the rest. To whom he said, 'Pray tell Mr. Wesley, I shall not give *him* the sacrament; for he is *not fit*.'"—It is no wonder, that a mind so wholly divested of christian charity, should be totally destitute of gratitude. This Mr. Romley owed his all in this world, to the tender love which Mr. Wesley's father had shown to his father, as well as personally to himself.

January 8. He came to Wednesbury, in Staffordshire, which his brother had already visited. At seven in the evening he preached in the town-hall. It was crowded with deeply attentive hearers. Mr. Egginton, the minister, seemed friendly disposed; and the prospect of doing much good, was fair and promising.—From hence Mr. Wesley went on to Bristol, and then to London. His stay was not long in either of these places. For February 14, notwithstanding the season of the year, and the badness of the roads at this time in many parts of England, he again set out on horseback for the North. On the 19th, he reached Newcastle: and here, and in the neighboring towns and villages he spent near six weeks, in preaching and exhorting, in praying and conversing with the people, and in regulating the societies. A great number of these societies were already formed exactly on the same principles, in various parts of the kingdom, though at a considerable distance one from another. But hitherto no general rules had been made to govern the whole. The two brothers, therefore, now drew up a set of rules which should be observed by the members of all their societies, and, as it were, unite them all into one body; so that a member at Newcastle, knew the rules of the society in London, as well as at the place where he resided. They were printed under the title of, "The Nature, Design, and GENERAL RULES of the United Societies, in London, Bristol, Newcastle upon Tyne," &c., and here it will be proper to insert them.

I. They state the nature and design of a Methodist society in the following words, "Such a society is no other than, a company of men, having the form, and seeking the power of godliness; united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to

watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."

"That it may the more easily be discerned, whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each society is divided into smaller companies, called *classes*, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in every class; one of whom is styled the *leader*. It is his business, 1. To see each person in his class once a week at least, in order to inquire, how their souls prosper. To advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as occasions require: to receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the poor. 2. To meet the minister and the *stewards* of the society once a week, in order to inform the minister of any that are sick; or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reprov'd: to pay to the stewards what they have received of their several classes, the week preceding; and, to show their account of what each person has contributed.

II. "There is one only condition previously required in those who desire admission into these societies, a desire 'to flee from the wrath to come,' to be saved from their sins. But wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

1. "By doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind; especially that which is most generally practised, such is

"The taking the name of God in vain: the profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work thereon, or by buying or selling: drunkenness: buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity: fighting, quarrelling, brawling; brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing: the using many words in buying or selling: the buying or selling uncustomed goods: the giving or taking things on usury; i. e., unlawful interest: uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates, or ministers: doing to others as we would not they should do unto us: doing what we know is not for the glory of God: as

"The putting on gold, or costly apparel: the taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus: the singing those songs, or reading those books, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God: softness, or needless self-indulgence: laying up treasures upon earth: borrowing without a probability of paying; or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.

"It is expected of all who continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation.

2. "By doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as is possible to all men: to their bodies, of the ability which God giveth; by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the

naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick, or in prison. To their souls, by instructing, reproving, or exhorting all they have intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine of devils, that, 'we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it.'

"By doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another; helping each other in business; and so much the more, because the world will love its own, and them only.

"By all possible diligence and frugality, that the gospel be not blamed: by running with patience the race that is set before them, 'denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily;' submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and off-scouring of the world; and looking that men should 'say all manner of evil of them falsely for the Lord's sake.'

"It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation.

3. "By attending upon all the ordinances of God. Such are, the public worship of God: the ministry of the word, either read or expounded: the supper of the Lord: family and private prayer: searching the Scriptures; and fasting and abstinence.

"These are the general rules of our societies; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written word, the only rule, and the *sufficient* rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be made known unto them who watch over that soul, as they that must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways: we will bear with him for a season. But if he repent not, he hath no more place with us. We have delivered our own soul.

"JOHN WESLEY,

"CHARLES WESLEY."

May 1, 1743.

The reader will take notice, 1. That the account here given of the *nature* and *design* of a Methodist society, differs essentially from the definitions hitherto given of a church. There is no mention of sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which was never administered except in a few of the larger societies, and then by a regular clergyman. The members were desired to attend this ordinance at the respective places of worship to which they belonged, and thereby continue their former church fellowship. Mr. Wesley, and the preachers with him, disclaimed every thought of making proselytes, and only sought to make Christians, among people of all denominations. 2. That, by the minister here mentioned, is meant a clergyman, the laymen who assisted being never called ministers, but simply preachers, or helpers of the ministers. One of these preachers, was afterwards called the assistant, because he was appointed to assist Mr. Wesley in the

government of the societies, and in his absence to enforce the rules, and direct every part of the discipline in the same manner Mr. Wesley would have done, had he been present.

Every member of the society was obliged to meet in class. But those, who, being justified by faith, had peace with God, and the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, were again divided into smaller companies, called bands; the men and women apart. Each band had a person called the leader, who met the little company once a week, and also received a small contribution for the poor. At the quarterly visitation, when the tickets were changed, these persons received a ticket with a B. printed upon it, signifying that they met in band. These are called band-tickets, and admit those who hold them into the meetings where the bands alone are assembled. The following are the

DIRECTIONS GIVEN TO THE BAND SOCIETIES.

“You are supposed to have the ‘faith that overcometh the world.’ To you, therefore, it is not grievous,

I. “Carefully to abstain from doing evil: in particular, 1. Neither to buy or sell anything at all on the Lord’s day. 2. To taste no spirituous liquor, no dram of any kind, unless prescribed by a physician. 3. To be at a word both in buying and selling. 4. To pawn nothing, no not to save life. 5. Not to mention the fault of any behind his back. 6. To wear no needless ornaments, such as rings, ear-rings, necklaces, lace, ruffles. 7. To use no needless self-indulgence, such as taking snuff, or tobacco, unless prescribed by a physician.

II. “Zealously to maintain good works: in particular, 1. To give alms of such things as you possess, and that to the uttermost of your power. 2. To reprove all that sin in your sight, and that in love, and meekness of wisdom. 3. To be patterns of diligence and frugality, of self-denial, and taking up the cross daily.

III. “Constantly to attend on all the ordinances of God: in particular, 1. To be at church, and at the Lord’s table every week; and at every public meeting of the bands. 2. To attend the public ministry of the word every morning,\* unless distance, business, or sickness prevent. 3. To use private prayer every day: and family prayer, if you are the head of a family. 4. To read the Scriptures, and meditate therein, at every vacant hour. And, 5. To observe, as days of fasting and abstinence, all Fridays in the year.”

On his return from Newcastle, Mr. Wesley again visited Wednesbury, where he found the society already increased to several hundreds. But a cloud was gathering over them which threatened a dreadful storm. The extreme folly of Mr. W——s, a preacher, I suppose, had so exasperated Mr. Egginton the minister, that his former love was turned into hatred. But he had not yet had time to work up the poor people into the rage and madness which afterwards

\* This was always at five o’clock, winter and summer, in all kinds of weather.



appeared.—The Sunday following the scene began to open. “I think,” says Mr. Wesley, “I never heard so wicked a sermon, and delivered with such bitterness of voice and manner, as that which Mr. Egginton preached in the afternoon. I knew what effect this must have in a little time, and therefore judged it expedient to prepare the poor people for what was to follow, that when it came, they might not be offended. Accordingly, I strongly enforced those words of our Lord, ‘If any man come after me, and hate not his father and mother—yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.’”

Having visited Bristol, and Wales, he returned to London; and May 29, began to officiate at the chapel in West-Street, near the Seven-Dials; built about sixty years before, by the French Protestants. By a strange chain of providences, a lease was obtained of this chapel, and the Methodists continue to hold it to the present time.

At this period Mr. Wesley staid but a short time in any place; he was, what the Reverend Mr. Lewis of Holt, some time after called him, an *individuum vagum*, a mere wanderer; for purposes however, which appeared to him of the utmost importance to the happiness of men. After having visited the classes, and set in order such things as required his care and attention, he set out for the North, taking the societies in Staffordshire, and various other places in his way to Newcastle, and again reached London in the latter end of July. In August, he observes, “Having found for some time a strong desire to unite with Mr. Whitefield as far as possible, to cut off needless dispute, I wrote down my sentiments as plain as I could in the following terms. There are three points in debate, 1. Unconditional election; 2. Irresistible grace; 3. Final perseverance. With regard to the first, unconditional election, I believe,

“That God before the foundation of the world, did unconditionally elect certain persons to do certain works; as Paul to preach the gospel: that he has unconditionally elected some nations to receive peculiar privileges, the Jewish nation in particular: that he has unconditionally elected some nations to hear the gospel, as England and Scotland now, and many others in past ages: that he has unconditionally elected some persons to many peculiar advantages, both with regard to temporal and spiritual things: and I do not deny, though I cannot prove it is so, that he has unconditionally elected some persons to eternal glory.

“But I cannot believe, That all those who are *not* thus elected to glory, *must* perish everlastingly: or, that there is one soul on earth, who has never had a *possibility* of escaping eternal damnation.

“With regard to the second, irresistible grace; I believe, That the grace which brings faith, and thereby salvation into the soul, is irre-

sistible *at that moment* : that most believers may remember some time when God irresistibly convinced them of sin : that most believers do at some other times, find God irresistibly acting upon their souls : yet I believe, that the grace of God both before and after those moments, may be, and hath been resisted ; and that, in general, it does not act irresistibly, but we *may* comply therewith, or *may not*. And I do not deny, that in *some* souls the grace of God is so far irresistible, that they cannot but believe, and be finally saved.

“ But I cannot believe, that all those *must* be damned, in whom it does not thus irresistibly work : or, that there is one soul on earth, who has not, and never had any other grace, than such as does in fact increase his damnation, and was designed of God so to do.

“ With regard to the third, final perseverance, I am inclined to believe, that there is a state attainable in this life, from which a man cannot finally fall : and that he has attained this, who can say, Old things are passed way ; all things in me are become new.”

August 26. Mr. Wesley set out for Cornwall, where his brother and two of the preachers had already labored with great success : but he made no considerable stop, till he came to St. Ives. Some time before, Captain Turner, of Bristol, connected it seems with the Methodists, had put in here, and was agreeably surprised to find a little society formed upon Dr. Woodward’s plan, who constantly met together.— They were greatly refreshed and strengthened by him, as he also was by them. This was the occasion of introducing the Methodists to this place. Mr. Wesley spake severally with those of the society, now increased to about a hundred and twenty ; near a hundred of whom had found peace with God. He spent three weeks in preaching here, and in Zennor, Morva, St. Just, Sennan, St. Mary’s (one of the Isles of Scilly) Gwenap, and on several of the Downs throughout the west of Cornwall. It has pleased God, to give increase to the seed sown by his servants, so that, it has since produced an abundant harvest. There is hardly any part of the three kingdoms where a change has been more visible and general, in the manners of the people. *Hurling*, their favorite diversion, at which limbs were often broken, and frequently lives lost, is now hardly heard of : and that scandal of humanity, so constantly practised on the coasts of Cornwall, the plundering vessels that struck upon the rocks, and often murdering those who escaped out of the wreck, is now either quite at an end, or the gentlemen, not the poor tinnors, are to be blamed. And more has been done to suppress smuggling, by preaching in this county and enforcing the rules of the society, than either the laws of the country, or the officers of excise, were ever able to effect. But it is not harmlessness, or outward decency alone, which has so increased, but the religion of the heart ; faith working by love, producing all inward as well as outward holiness.

October 3. Having visited Wales, he returned to Bristol, and now

received full information of the riots at Wednesbury. Mr. Egginton, assisted by two neighboring justices, Mr. Lane of Bentley-Hall, and Mr. Persehouse of Walsal, having stirred up the basest of the people, such outrages followed as were a scandal to the christian name. Riotous mobs were summoned together by sound of horn; men, women, and children abused in the most shocking manner; being beaten, stoned, covered with mud; some, even pregnant women, treated in a manner that cannot be mentioned. Meantime their houses were broke open by any that pleased, and their goods spoiled or carried away, at Wednesbury, Darlaston, West-Bromwich, &c. some of the owners standing by, but not daring to gainsay, as it would have been at the peril of their lives. Mr. Wesley thought it was his duty to visit this harassed people in their distress, and on the 17th, set forward towards this scene of confusion and outrage. On the 20th, having preached at Birmingham, he rode over to Wednesbury, and preached at noon in a ground near the middle of the town, on Jesus Christ 'the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.'—"No creature offered to molest us," says Mr. Wesley, "either going or coming: but the Lord fought for us, and we held our peace."

Mr. Wesley proceeds. "I was writing at Francis Ward's in the afternoon, when the cry arose, that the mob had beset the house.—We prayed that God would disperse them: and so it was; one went this way, and another that, so that in a half an hour not a man was left. I told our brethren now is the time to go: but they pressed me exceedingly to stay. So, that I might not offend them, I sat down, though I foresaw what would follow. Before five the mob surrounded the house again, and in greater numbers than ever. The cry of one and all was, 'Bring out the minister, we will have the minister.' I desired one to take the captain by the hand and bring him into the house. After a few sentences interchanged between us, the lion was become a lamb. I desired him to go, and bring one or two of the most angry of his companions. He brought in two, who were ready to swallow the ground with rage: but in two minutes they were as calm as he. I then bade them make way, that I might go out among the people. As soon as I was in the midst of them, I called for a chair, and asked, 'What do any of you want with me?' Some said, we want you to go with us to the justice. I replied, that I will with all my heart. I then spoke a few words, which God applied; so that they cried out with might and main, 'The gentleman is an honest gentleman, and we will spill our blood in his defence.' I asked, 'Shall we go to the justice to-night or in the morning?' Most of them cried, 'To-night, to-night:' on which I went before, and two or three hundred followed, the rest returning whence they came.

"The night came on before we had walked a mile, together with heavy rain. However, on we went to Bentley-Hall, two miles from Wednesbury. One or two ran before, to tell Mr. Lane, 'They had

brought Mr. Wesley before his worship.' Mr. Lane replied, 'What have I to do with Mr. Wesley? Go and carry him back again.' By this time the main body came up, and began knocking at the door. A servant told them, Mr. Lane was in bed. His son followed, and asked, what was the matter? One replied, 'Why, an 't please you, they sing psalms all day; nay, and make folks rise at five in the morning. And what would your worship advise us to do?' 'To go home,' said Mr. Lane, 'and be quiet.'

"Here they were at a full stop, till one advised to go to Justice Persehouse, at Walsal. All agreed to this: so we hastened on, and about seven came to his house. But Mr. Persehouse likewise sent word, that he was in bed. Now they were at a stand again: but at last they all thought it the wisest course to make the best of their way home. About fifty of them undertook to convoy me. But we had not gone a hundred yards, when the mob of Walsal came pouring in like a flood, and bore down all before them. The Darlaston mob made what defence they could; but they were weary, as well as out-numbered: so that, in a short time, many being knocked down, the rest went away, and left me in their hands.

"To attempt speaking was vain; for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea. So they dragged me along till we came to the town: where seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go in; but a man catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the mob. They made no more stop till they had carried me through the main street, from one end of the town to the other.—I continued speaking all the time to those within hearing, feeling no pain or weariness. At the west-end of the town, seeing a door half open, I made towards it, and would have gone in. But a gentleman in the shop would not suffer me, saying, they would pull the house to the ground. However, I stood at the door and asked, 'Are you willing to hear me speak?' Many cried out, 'No, no! knock his brains out: down with him: kill him at once.' Others said, 'Nay; but we will hear him first.' I began asking, 'What evil have I done? Which of you all have I wronged in word or deed?' And continued speaking for above a quarter of an hour, till my voice suddenly failed. Then the floods began to lift up their voices again; many crying out, 'Bring him away, bring him away.'

"In the mean time my strength and my voice returned, and I broke out aloud into prayer. And now the man who just before headed the mob, turned and said, 'Sir, I will spend my life for you. Follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head.' Two or three of his fellows confirmed his words, and got close to me immediately. At the same time the gentleman in the shop cried out, 'For shame, for shame, let him go.' An honest butcher, who was a little further off, said it was a shame they should do thus: and pulled back four or five, one after another, who were running on the most fiercely.

The people then, as if it had been by common consent, fell back to the right and left: while those three or four men took me between them, and carried me through them all. But on the bridge the mob rallied again; we therefore went on one side, over the mill-dam, and thence through the meadows: till a little before ten, God brought me safe to Wednesbury; having lost only one flap of my waistcoat, and a little skin from one of my hands.

“From the beginning to the end, I found the same presence of mind, as if I had been sitting in my own study. But I took no thought for one moment before another: only once it came into my mind, that if they should throw me into the river, it would spoil the papers that were in my pocket. For myself, I did not doubt but I should swim across, having but a thin coat, and a light pair of boots.

“The circumstances that follow, I thought were particularly remarkable. 1. That many endeavored to throw me down while we were going down hill, on a slippery path to the town; as well judging, that if I was once on the ground, I should hardly rise any more. But I made no stumble at all, nor the least slip, till I was entirely out of their hands. 2. That although many strove to lay hold on my collar or clothes, to pull me down, they could not fasten at all: only one got fast hold of the flap of my waistcoat, which was soon left in his hand. 3. That a lusty man just behind, struck at me several times, with a large oaken stick; with which if he had struck me once on the back part of my head, it would have saved him all further trouble. But every time the blow was turned aside, I know not how. 4. That another came rushing through the press, and raising his arm to strike, on a sudden let it drop, and only stroked my head, saying, ‘What soft hair he has!’ 5. That I stopped exactly at the mayor’s door, as if I had known it, which the mob doubtless thought I did, and found him standing in the shop; which gave the first check to the madness of the people. 6. That the very first men whose hearts were turned, were the heroes of the town, the captains of the rabble on all occasions; one of them having been a prize-fighter at the bear-gardens. 7. That from first to last, I heard none give me a reviling word, or call me by any *opprobrious* name whatever. But the cry of one and all was, ‘The preacher! the preacher! the parson! the minister!’ 8. That no creature, at least within my hearing, laid anything to my charge, either true or false; having in the hurry quite forgot to provide themselves with an accusation of any kind. And lastly, they were utterly at a loss, what they should do with me; none proposing any determinate thing; only, ‘Away with him, kill him at once.’

“When I came back to Francis Ward’s, I found many of our brethren waiting upon God. Many also whom I had never seen before, came to rejoice with us. And the next morning as I rode through the town, in my way to Nottingham, every one I met

expressed such a cordial affection, that I could scarce believe what I saw and heard.

“I cannot close this head, without inserting as great a curiosity in its kind, as, I believe, was ever yet seen in England; which had its birth within a very few days of this remarkable occurrence at Walsal.

“*Staffordshire.*

“To all High-Constables, Petty-Constables, and other of his Majesty’s Peace-officers within the said county, &c.

“Whereas we his majesty’s justices of the peace, for the said county of Stafford, have received information, that several disorderly persons, styling themselves Methodist preachers, go about raising routs and riots, to the great damage of his majesty’s liege people, and against the peace of our sovereign lord the king :

“These are in his majesty’s name, to command you, and every one of you, within your respective districts, to make diligent search after the said Methodist preachers, and to bring him or them before some of us his said majesty’s justices of the peace, to be examined concerning their unlawful doings.

“Given under our hands and seals this      day of October, 1743.

J. LANE,

W. PERSEHOUSE.”

It appears from the preceding account, that these were the two justices to whom the mob carried Mr. Wesley, and who severally refused to see him. What is it a mob will not dare to do, when encouraged to break the peace, by the very men who are sworn to maintain it!

Mr. Wesley now went forwards toward the north, and on Sunday, Oct. 30, being at Wensley, he preached in the church, on, “What must I do to be saved?” He showed in the plainest terms he could devise, that outward religion will not bring us to heaven : that none can go thither without inward holiness, which is only to be attained by faith. As he went back through the church-yard, many of the parish were in high debate, what religion this preacher was of? Some said he must be a Quaker; others, an Anabaptist: but at length one deeper learned than the rest, brought them all clearly over to his opinion, that he was, a Presbyterian-Papist!

February 15, 1744. A report prevailed that the French threatened an invasion, and were expected to land every hour, in support of Charles Stuart, the pretender to the crown of England. At this critical time, many addresses were sent up to the throne, expressing attachment to the principles of the revolution, and to the king’s person and government. The alarm was general; the principles of the Methodists were but imperfectly known, and their itinerancy and private societies brought them under general suspicion. Mr. Wesley was therefore desired to write an address to the king, and March 5, he complied with the request and wrote as follows :

“To the King’s Most Excellent Majesty :

“The humble Address of the Societies in England and Wales, in derision called Methodists.

“MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

“So inconsiderable as we are, a people scattered and peeled and trodden under foot from the beginning hitherto, we should in no wise have presumed, even on this great occasion, to open our lips to your majesty, had we not been induced, indeed constrained so to do, by two considerations: the one, that in spite of all our remonstrances on that head, we are continually represented as a peculiar sect of men, separating ourselves from the established church; the other, that we are still traduced as inclined to popery, and consequently disaffected to your Majesty.

“Upon these considerations, we think it incumbent upon us, if we must stand as a distinct body from our brethren, to tender for ourselves, our most dutiful regards to your sacred Majesty: and to declare in the presence of him we serve, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, that we are a part, however mean, of that Protestant church established in these kingdoms: that we unite together for this and no other end, to promote, so far as we be capable, justice, mercy, and truth; the glory of God, and peace and good will among men: that we detest and abhor the fundamental doctrines of the church of Rome, and are steadily attached to your Majesty’s royal person and illustrious house.

“We cannot indeed, say or do either more or less, than we apprehend consistent with the written word of God. But we are ready to obey your Majesty to the uttermost, in all things which we conceive to be agreeable thereto. And we earnestly exhort all with whom we converse, as they fear God, to honor the king. We of the clergy in particular, put all men in mind to revere the higher powers, as of God: and continually declare, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience’ sake.

“Silver and gold, most of us must own, we have none. But such as we have, we humbly beg your Majesty to accept: together with our hearts and prayers: may he who hath bought us with his blood, the Prince of all the kings of the earth, fight against all the enemies of your Majesty, with the two-edged sword that cometh out of his mouth! And when he calleth your Majesty from this throne, full of years and victories, may it be with that voice, ‘Come, receive the kingdom prepared for thee, from the beginning of the world!’

“These are the continual prayers of, your Majesty’s dutiful and loyal subjects, John Wesley, &c.”—This address was not presented; it being on further consideration, judged best to lay it aside.\*

“In April,” says Mr. Wesley, “I took a second journey into Corn-

\* See vol. i. page 172.

wall, and went through many towns I had not seen before. Since my former visit, there had been hot persecution both of the preachers and people. The preaching-house, at St. Ives, was pulled to the ground: one of the preachers pressed and sent for a soldier, as were several of the people: over and above the being stoned, covered with dirt and the like, which was the treatment many of them met with from day to day. But notwithstanding this they who had been eminent for hurling, fighting, drinking, and all manner of wickedness, continued eminent for sobriety, piety, and all manner of goodness. In all parts, more and more of the lions became lambs, continually praising God, and calling their old companions in sin, to come and magnify the Lord together. About the same time John Nelson, and Thomas Beard, were pressed and sent for soldiers, for no other crime, either committed or pretended, than that of calling sinners to repentance. The case of John Nelson is well known. Thomas Beard also, was nothing terrified by his adversaries. Yet the body after a while sunk under its burden. He was then lodged in the hospital of Newcastle, where he still praised God continually. His fever increasing, he was let blood: his arm festered, mortified and was cut off: two or three days after which, God signed his discharge, and called him up to his eternal home.

“All this year the alarms were uninterrupted, from the French on the one hand, and the rebels on the other: and a general panic ran through the nation, from the east to the west, from the north to the south. I judged it the more needful to visit as many places as possible, and avail myself of the precious opportunity. My brother and our other preachers were of the same mind: they spoke and spared not. They rushed through every open door, ‘And cried, sinners behold the Lamb!’ And their word did not fall to the ground: they saw abundant fruit of their labor. I went through many parts of Wales: through most of the midland counties; and then through Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire to Newcastle upon Tyne. And multitudes who were utterly careless before, did now prepare to meet their God.”

The persecution at St. Ives, Mr. Wesley observes, “Was owing in great measure to the indefatigable labors of Mr. Hoblin, and Mr. Simmons: gentlemen worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance, for their unwearied endeavors to destroy heresy.

*“Fortunati ambo! Siquid mea pagina possit,  
Nulla dies unquam memori vos eximet ævo.”*

Happy both! Long as my writings, shall your fame remain.

The riots in Staffordshire still continued in the beginning of this year. The mob of Walsal, Darlaston, and Wednesbury, hired for the purpose by their betters, broke open their poor neighbors' houses at their pleasure, by day and by night, extorting money from the few that had it; taking away, or destroying their victuals and goods;



beating and wounding their bodies; abusing their women, and openly declaring they would destroy every Methodist in the country: the christian country where his majesty's peaceable and loyal subjects were so treated for eight months, and then publicly branded in the Whitehall and London Evening-Post, for rioters and incendiaries!

From Cornwall, Mr. Wesley passed over into Wales; on his return he made a short stay at Bristol, and then set out for the north, visiting most of the societies in his way to Newcastle. June 20, he returned to London, where he met his brother, two or three other clergymen, and a few of the preachers, whom he had appointed to come from various parts, to *confer* with them on the affairs of the societies. Mr. Wesley observes, "Monday, June 25, and the five following days, we spent in *conference* with our preachers, seriously considering, by what means we might the most effectually save our own souls and them that heard us. And the result of our consultations we set down, to be the *RULE of our future practice.*"—'This was the first Methodist Conference: and for the better regulation of their affairs, a conference has been held annually ever since; Mr. Wesley having presided at forty-seven such conferences. The subjects of their deliberations were proposed in the form of questions, which were amply discussed; and the questions with the answers agreed upon were written down, and afterwards printed, under the title of, "Minutes of several Conversations between the Reverend Mr. Wesley and others:" commonly called "Minutes of Conference."